

Philosophy of Teaching  
Alison N Vasquez, MFA

I have the right to be here.  
I have nothing to prove.  
I am who I am.

Every semester since 2009, I begin my first day of teaching any given class by sharing this mantra with my students. As a first-generation college attendee, I strive to be the instructor, guide, mentor, and collaborator I needed when I was a student. I follow the mantra as my own small guide throughout the semester as my students and I connect to the class material and each other.

I have the right to be here.  
Engaging with each and every student in my class is high on my priority list. I seek to learn where they are in their studies and in their trek as human beings. I work on creating an ensemble-based classroom by scaffolding the discussions around pairs and begin small group work in class within the first week. The discussions are often based on finding their views and encouraging their unique voice as important, valuable, and necessary for learning to happen.

I have nothing to prove.  
The last several years it has become clear that my students are often at the beginning of their higher ed journeys, and they have many questions. Facilitating a safe environment where they can ask questions is of the utmost importance to me. I offer office hours and I have been requiring two check-ins during the semester. I request they meet individually with me between the first week and the mid-term, and then again between the mid-term and the final. These meetings have been eye opening for the students as well as my own focused teaching. The meetings allow the students to freely express their joys, concerns and needs for success in the class. Retention and success rates have been noticeably higher, and the students know they may drop by my office long after they have completed a class with me.

I am who I am.  
I am a tall, focused, passionate Latina, and as such I encourage each student to shine with their own unique individualism in each discussion, paper, presentation, and performance. The classroom is the perfect place to acknowledge the beauty in the silence, and thoughtfulness of an introverted nature. I also celebrate the energy, boldness, and passionate beings in my classes. Finding ways to engage each individual student as they connect with the materials without creating a “gold star” system is important to me. I discuss Patsy Rodenburg’s “Second Circle” that encourages equality and being present in the moment in class, on stage, and in life.

My goal is that each student will leave my class with a deeper understanding of where they fit into the art known as Theatre, a stronger connection to their voice in the artform, and the world they choose to create.