

Before Teaching Statement:

My teaching philosophy is synthesized from mentors and teachers at Koç University (Istanbul, Turkey), Bryn Mawr College, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Michigan. I had a unique opportunity to watch and learn from their expertise and pedagogical skills. I was encouraged to go beyond the traditional borders of art history by asking fearless and provoking questions. This skill resonates in my own research and teaching. To examine and discuss them, I do not stop with traditional questions of provenance and chronology, but go beyond their given cultural or artistic contextual borders. The Norman Sicilian Cappella Palatina is a great example of teaching the art and architecture of the Mediterranean world because it is a monument that synthesizes several distinct cultural styles (Byzantine, Islamic, Coptic, Romanesque, and Maghreb) in its royal political and religious propaganda. Given its evolving complexity, Cappella Palatina is key to teaching multiculturalism and religious plurality and enables students to pose difficult questions with regard to Christian, Muslim, and Jewish contestations over sacred space in the western Mediterranean. Then, the question we must pose is how we can teach students to put the multicultural craftsmanship of the Cappella Palatina in dialogue with the Divriği Great Mosque and Hospital Complex (Sivas Province, Turkey), on which Christian and Muslim craftsmen enacted exceptional ornamentation and architectural elements a century later.

I love being in the classroom with my students. Teaching is an organic and dynamic experience because each student has a different learning style: they can be visual, auditory, or tactile learners. I like to hear what they find most interesting. My goal is to provide them with a safe and encouraging environment that enables them to ask questions fearlessly; posing challenging queries is one of the most important elements of learning. I myself enjoy listening to my students' stories, discussions, and questions; as a pedagogue, this is how I create personal and intellectual connections with them. My mentor once said that teaching would alter my research, and creating bonds with my students has changed the ways I approach both my research and teaching.

In my classroom, I have learned that using a variety of different teaching methods and strategies can foster diversity and inclusion within a learning space. I express interest in the stories my students tell and take time to learn to pronounce my students' names properly. Celebrating different languages can be one of the ways to provide an inclusive teaching and learning community. I show my students that I am a facilitator who nurtures safe and encouraging learning environments. I want to hear what they find most interesting to learn. Each student has a different learning style: they can be visual, auditory, or tactile learners. My responsibility is to provide a variety of materials and an equal amount of resources for different learning styles. My commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and equity in academia, and in life, cannot be encompassed through a written statement or a theoretical approach. Instead, I believe that it is a pro-active mode of being, and of acts continuously extended to others.

I have three important goals in teaching. First, I respect the differences between and challenges faced by students. Inclusive teaching involves equity at all levels. It means value, recognition, support, and equal access to resources in learning. This begins with interpersonal interaction, fostering a sense of belonging, and maintaining transparency in process and expectations. I always learn by students' names within the first two or three weeks. I acknowledge that students have different life experiences and perceptions, and I encourage them to use these differences as useful learning assets. Acknowledging various skill sets helps to cultivate a more diverse yet still cohesive community, allowing for respectful engagement with classmates and scholarly ideas. Instead of asking my students if they had done their readings, I asked them if they had enjoyed their readings and what interested them in particular. I encourage them to engage with at least one key idea in a

reading to open a stimulating discussion. My responsibility as a teacher is to make students feel welcome and valued, heard and essential, both socially and intellectually, in the teaching space that I provide.

Second, teaching continues with mentoring. I believe that good mentors make themselves openly available to students. I always stand at the ready to listen, guide, give critical feedback, and be supportive of my students. I print out students' short essays and provide them with handwritten feedback—something that the students, who were born into the digital age, often find astonishing. As a pedagogue, this is how I intellectually create a connection with them.

Third, learning is prompted by fearless questions. I believe that posing challenging queries is one of the most important elements of learning. Questions enable students to engage with a topic, voice their opinions within a larger conversation, and actively process what they are taught. At times, students might be too shy or overwhelmed to ask questions. They also might not know how to ask questions, or where to begin. They might not have been encouraged to participate in conversation or to challenge an idea, or have been taught that asking questions is more important than finding answers. Thus, my primary goal as a teacher is to provide students with a safe and encouraging environment that enables them to ask questions fearlessly—to teach them how to think, not what to think.

Additionally, the adaptation of the medieval world in popular culture—including historical video games, films, and books, as well as recent developments in artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality—are of great interest to me. I teach “Medievalism in Video Games: Art, Culture and Theory,” a course in which my students examine neo-medievalist tropes in historical video games while they learn about the visual and material culture of the global Middle Ages. I look forward to meeting and chatting with students who are interested in digital tools, games, and art history.

Moreover, in my academic specialty and research, I study the multiethnic, multilingual, and multireligious inhabitants of medieval Anatolia. These communities created a rich and diverse material culture with a shared and fluid decorative vocabulary. I explore how the material cultural histories of medieval Christian and Muslim communities were closely interwoven. Instead of separating and distinguishing them from each other, I study their connected visual vocabulary and material imbrications, which clearly demonstrate evidence of mutual exchange and co-habitation. It is this complex richness—rather than clean but flawed taxonomic division—that informs my research and my teaching.