

**Lee Bloxom**  
**Statement of Teaching Philosophy**

I believe in the power of education to change the world. What education changes, of course, is not the world itself, but the thoughts and actions of men and women. As a teacher, I design learning experiences to encourage students to take risks in the classroom, to discern how they best learn so they can use education to meet their life goals, and to expand their ideas about what is possible.

Specifically I teach communication, media studies, writing, and documentary arts. Sometimes the goal is for students to become more skilled writers or speakers. Sometimes I am teaching aspects of media studies. Always I want students to investigate questions that lack simple answers. Always I want students to leave my classroom better equipped to pursue their goals than when they crossed the threshold on the first day of class.

My first job when I graduated from Wellesley College was as newspaper reporter for *The Virginia Gazette* in Williamsburg. From there, I worked in corporate communications as a video producer, newsletter editor, and public relations specialist in charge of volunteer services, donor relations, media relations, and publications.

Since 1996, I have taught courses with varying names and stated subjects – *Media Criticism, Writing and Rhetoric Workshop II, Documentary: Beyond the Evening News, Media & Society*, and *The Recorded Human Voice: Using Interviews in Radio, Drama, and Text*. Writing has been central in every course.

As a pedagogical tool, writing gives students an excellent way to focus and deepen their thinking. Even if the stated purpose of a class is something other than writing, I ask students to write frequently. Through practice, their writing is likely to improve, particularly when I employ low-stakes writing assignments in addition to writing as a means for assessment.

My goal in every classroom is to foster a classroom community where the cultivation of knowledge becomes a shared experience. While it is essential that I am clear about course objectives, it is also essential that I remain open to various means for meeting those objectives. I listen to my students to shape the direction and goals of a course, allowing as much empowerment as is appropriate for the student population and institutional culture in which the course resides.

As a teacher, I am willing to embrace digital technology and try new pedagogical methods in an attempt to create effective learning experiences. I also respect that my students have professional goals and that it is my job as their instructor to help them prepare for the future. And yet, I sometimes wonder if the most valuable thing I can offer students is a place for reflection – a space for them to be less practical, less plugged-in, and to explore what it means to be human in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. This does not mean I believe we should remain isolated from the “real world.” In the spring semester 2012 I taught a service-learning seminar called *Radio and the Internet*, in which students, as part of their required course work, volunteered twenty hours for a community-run, low-power FM station in order to better understand how radio is evolving. An important part of their experience, however, was their written and oral reflection on their experiences. Encouraging and structuring reflection is a key component of my pedagogy.

In an attempt to provide practical education, our institutions frequently train students for careers that disappear with the click of a computer key. I believe a better approach is to teach students how to think critically and how to learn, to encourage them make a paradigm shift from passive student to active, lifelong learner. That, to me, is the true goal of a teacher – to guide students through learning experiences so that they advance to a point where they no longer need me as a guide.

For an expanded Teaching Philosophy Statement, course materials and samples of student work, visit my Teaching Portfolio: <http://plbteaching.wordpress.com/>