

Statement of Teaching Philosophy Seth Taylor O'Neal

I am a continual student and teacher that hopes to instill positive qualities and skills in students for their success in and out of the classroom. I am fortunate to have had supportive mentors in my life and I strive to be a mentor to my own students. Past or present, I help students to succeed in every capacity. Education is a multifaceted occupation that allows me to explore interpersonal relationships, research, and guide. I keep up to date on teaching methods and am always refining my curriculum. Being a teacher also allows me to explore topics with students and grow in my own understanding. History helps develop the tools to succeed and is necessary for skills that students need in the classroom, workplace, and home.

The study of history develops skills that are interdisciplinary but also imperative for today's modern applications. In my class, students learn to express themselves and their opinions. One of the most important qualities a student can learn is how to professionally express their thoughts or ideas in writing. My lessons help develop different viewpoints, first through discussions, and then through writing techniques that are gradually taught and built upon. At the beginning of the year a writing schedule is presented, and students gradually tackle papers in chunks. Students start with a small paper that allows me to gauge areas the class needs to improve in. Then, I break a small research paper into individual assignments that are covered in detail with examples during class. Papers are graded with a rubric that is explained and presented to the students. Feedback is given to students on submitted papers and is necessary for improvement. At the end of the class, students will be able to write and present their ideas and opinions in an academic style.

Opinions or views based on nothing cannot stand and this helps show the value of research. Learning how to research in today's world and the ability to sift through mountains of data has become increasingly important. In class multiple research techniques are used to show how to be successful when formulating an opinion or when trying to find accurate sources. The differences between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources are imperative to formulating research. Introducing different sources into the classroom and learning how to find and use them will help build the ability to research efficiently. This also helps students complete web searches more efficiently outside of the discipline, and better prepares them to ask and answer questions online.

Up to date and historical literature improves learning outside the classroom. Exposure to new ideas and styles help students to better understand periods of history culturally and in greater detail. It also helps expand student interest in specific topics. A book list is presented on the syllabus at the beginning of the year and reading assignments are outlined. Reading material reinforces ideas, enables thoughtful discussion, and improves scholarship. Small quizzes are given to students based on reading material and only serve to ensure that reading is completed.

In my teaching style, the curriculum develops soft skills. In class students learn how to objectively look at all sides. First-hand accounts and primary documents introduced in class help contextualize events and people while making it more "real." The ability to empathize and understand different perspectives is important and not only in history.