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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

As a counselor educator, I am passionate about helping develop the next generation of counselors into knowledgeable, ethical, clinically adept, and multicultural-oriented clinicians. Philosophically, I ascribe to the pragmatic-constructivist idea that knowledge is socially constructed through interactions with our ever-changing environments and our perceptions of our experiences. As such, my approach to classroom facilitation emphasizes the exchange of ideas; I encourage students to make guesses when they are uncertain of the “answer”, under the premise that there are no absolute truths, and their perspective could add to the overall understanding of the concepts being discussed. I find that learners derive significant value from classroom environments wherein each member of the learning community feels safe and respected. To promote such a communal learning space, I often draw from my counseling theoretical orientation, ensuring that my interactions with students are grounded in congruence and nonjudgmental acceptance.

Theory of Adult Learning

My conceptualization of adult learning incorporates aspects of the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), Knowles’s 1980 ‘andragogical model’, and the pragmatic idea that knowledge is constructed through a combination of inquiry, experimentation, and experience. With these concepts in mind, my approach to teaching emphasizes “learning by doing” and creating opportunities (i.e., in-class activities, and assignments) for the practical application of theoretical and more abstract concepts. I recognize that counselors develop progressively across several phases. Considering that the needs of students will vary within each phase, my approach to teaching varies between didactic, Socratic, or a combination of the two, contingent upon the difficulty level of the stage of development of the student(s) and the difficulty level of the course/content being instructed.

View of the Student & Expectations of the Teacher-Student Relationship

As an educator, students can expect me to be respectful, prepared, objective/challenging, humorous, nonjudgmental, congruent, and encouraging. Students can also expect timely and consistent feedback on their work performance, responsiveness to their questions and concerns, and transparency and clear communication concerning grading and evaluation. My approach to classroom management is authoritative, while acknowledging and not abusing, the inherent power differential between instructor and student. In lieu of viewing myself as the “expert”, I consider my role within the learning environment as that of a facilitator with some expertise; as an instigator rather than an instiller of learning.

I view the role of the student as being an active participant in the learning experience. In this context, I expect students to approach the learning environment respectfully and be prepared to share their ideas, engage in dialogue, pose questions, and share reflections. I also expect that students approach the learning experience with an open-mindedness. My ultimate goal for the teacher-student relationship is to co-construct and engage in opportunities for collaborative learning.

Evaluation

It is my ethical responsibility as a counselor educator to engage in professional gatekeeping and ongoing assessment of counseling students’ academic performance, skill, disposition, and overall competency for professional practice. As an instructor, I aim to help students progress beyond a place of tacit knowledge and surface learning, and facilitate deep processing. In recognizing that each learner presents their own unique experiences, interests, and needs, my approach to teaching incorporates various methods of evaluation of student learning that encompasses more than the memorization that is required by more standardized forms of testing. I am also committed to providing students with comprehensive and timely feedback on their performance, and assisting with securing remedial assistance, when necessary.