

# Sean Alan Forbes

## Teaching Philosophy

Not wanting to lead students into accepting ideas unconsidered, my goal is provide opportunities for students to become knowledgeable and critical participants in their education. Students and I together should learn and relearn to identify perspective, limitations, and contributions of a discipline as they evolve. Here, course content becomes impetus for beliefs and actions; topics avoid becoming stale.

That said it's not enough that students are critical of other's ideas; the task is to have them to be critical of their own, as well, and understand where they fit historically. That is, if students are to become learned in a given field they must learn to develop well formulated ideas that, though they may not concur with other's ideas at least address ongoing debates within a field. And, those lessons should be reinforced with the standards of effective communication so that they may make their ideas intelligible. To accomplish these goals I use a variety of strategies.

Foremost among these is service-learning. From this approach students gain experience applying course material in the potential resolution of identified community needs – an ideal learning laboratory. Students have the benefit of the teacher's experience and the teachers hopefully are reminded of the precariousness of learning. The two depend on each other and remind the other of their respective responsibilities. Sometimes it not pretty; most times it's engaging.

Also, using an interdisciplinary approach helps to develop critical appreciation of ideas. For example, one of the hallmark psychological events of adolescence is the formation of an identity. An adequate discussion of identity, however, cannot rely on psychological notions of identity alone. Considering the contributions of literature, philosophy, among others, allows students to appreciate the significance of identity formation through life experience while demonstrating how the current understanding evolved.

My effectiveness as an educator varies by student, most certainly. But, I work for a relationship with students that is challenging, disarming, and receptive.