

Octavia “Alonge” Clarkson Teaching Statement

Voice

My actions as a teacher reflect my beliefs about teaching and learning because I do not simply give assignments just for the sake of having students do work. My aim is also for each student to leave my class feeling confident because they have developed their own voice and felt equipped with the tools to navigate the world. Each assignment I give is meaningful and involves further critical analysis, outside research and lived experience. For example, in my class “American Visions” they must complete an Annotated Bibliography where they develop a thesis that reflects one of the Unit Readings. This helps the student to establish their voice through their interests. Students then must utilize their research skills to determine credible sources that would provide context to their claim. This preliminary research is the foundation of what they can continue to explore throughout my class for their Final Research Papers. I provide students with the tools to use their voice confidently because it is important for their current and future identity. Manifesting a voice instills an empowerment and acceptance of the student’s contribution to discussion. I ask students questions that allow them to process inwardly (asking questions within themselves) as well as outwardly (asking their peers questions). This approach allows students to confront how they feel, knowing that it is their contribution to the field. Voice also encompasses language that is spoken within the class. I desire to be a teacher who affirms students often, that way they can know that I believe in their continued success.

Genuine

As an educator, one of my greatest strengths is my relatability. As a well-rounded student much of my life, I have participated in many different activities and befriended a diverse group of people that have many interests. This has allowed me to remain outgoing, open-minded, and able to connect with students from different backgrounds and various upbringings. I believe that all students can learn and will learn with access to an education. I am aware that everyone learns in different ways and therefore I strive to incorporate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic ways of learning. I encourage and invite inquisition and curiosity in my classroom to allow students the ability to increase their soft skills. I desire to assist students with increasing their desire to analyze, interrogate and critique within the process of learning. My techniques include incorporating individual and group tasks, as well as reading and writing assignments. To maintain a variety of prompts, I provide lectures using technology, such as PowerPoint, YouTube videos and Zoom. I strongly believe that educating our future generations of leaders and changemakers is more than standing in front of a class and delivering the material. It is a safe and brave place of learning and discussion. My classroom transforms the mind by building a foundation for the thought process of every scholar. Within the discipline of English, I teach African American literature, with the method to prioritize and interpret African phenomena from its African center. I advance the field by teaching literature and history from a global perspective. Gradually, my course empowers students to engage in the curriculum, clarifying any

misconceptions that once hindered thinking. This allows students the ability to feel confident about themselves and what they offer to their community and the world.

Growth

I strive to have students build personal as well as academic skills. For example, I challenge students to make concepts applicable to their life as well as to the lives of others they may know and love. For example, in the class “African Americans in Sport,” before we begin discussing the history of sport, I challenge students to describe why they participate in a sport and what success would be like for them. In this example, students can determine the value that people place on sport and the meaning of success based on life’s experiences. This activity opens dialogue to the differences in value systems, and demonstrates the way respect can be prioritized. This activity also highlights the importance of diversity. These skills translate within the academy and throughout the world because my students question whether something shared in class is a trend for sports that has been researched or needs to be researched. My aim for the students is for them to conduct critical analyses and independent research into the questions that they begin to investigate. Each of my students are expected to excel and achieve growth in a way that they determine, but at least in the knowledge of African American literature.