I personally share John Dewey’s views of education and learning as being both social and interactive. The school is a social institution where students are stimulated to interact with the curriculum being taught, and the education received in school should affect social change. Embracing the work of Paulo Freire and his premise that dialogue and critical thought are crucial in education, I allow my teaching to be participatory and student-centered. I emphasize the value of diversity, personal life experience, and the unique perspectives of vulnerable people as well as those with power and privilege. I believe that students not only learn from reading assignments, presentations, and writing, but also from discussing their ideas with others, as they become critical thinkers.

The college years are often full of uncertainties, and for many young people, it is the first time they live away from home and participate in the community as adults. As they begin to enter adulthood, many of them do not know what is expected of them, as many of their responsibilities begin to change not only in society, but also at school and at home. It is also an age of experimentation and freethinking. As undergraduates, they begin to engage in dialogue with people from diverse backgrounds and views, and begin to question their previous beliefs and ideologies. I strongly believe one of my roles as an instructor is to provide opportunities for students to stretch their perspectives and abilities. I find it important to provide opportunities for students to challenge their beliefs and move beyond their present comfort zones of knowledge and intuition.

I facilitate my students’ learning and thinking process to enable them to activate their prior knowledge and know when to apply the concepts, procedures, and methods being taught. I believe education should take place in a positive learning environment where students can share their ideas openly with other students as well as with the educator. I am consciously aware of my surroundings to ensure that I am inclusive of all and do not judge others for their personal opinions. I pay attention to students’ emotions and curiosity about people from different cultures. Students often ask me where I am from because they detect an accent they do not recognize, I ask them to guess where they think I am from. So far, no one has guessed correctly. This creates a dialogue to help explain to students that not all emigrants from other countries immigrate directly to the United States. I also encourage students to use the skills they learned not only in the classroom, but also beyond the classroom. This helps them develop a sense of autonomy and responsibility, beginning with their responsibility towards their schoolwork.

I believe that people learn in different ways, including by modeling. Teachers model their beliefs and values as they present material and then encourage students to use their newly gained knowledge. As an educator, I believe in presenting the big picture and providing information both as a whole and in parts. To do this, I believe in providing assignments that develop the students’ mastery of the knowledge and skills. I want my students to be effective listeners and gain metacognition so that they become critical thinkers and effective problem solvers. I teach by engaging students in active learning and ensure that the methods I use encompass a wide variety of dimensions such as reading collections, individual and group projects and exercises, article critiques, case scenarios, guest speakers, visual aids, and lectures or presentations. In addition, I try to integrate both my research and practice experience into the classroom to provide students with real-life examples that relate to the course content.
I provide concrete examples, and when appropriate, share some of my personal stories. I employ the process of evaluation to become aware of the strengths and challenges of students. By looking for patterns of error, I can identify areas needing more attention and determine the best way to ensure the students gain the desired knowledge. I give students constant feedback on their work as well as the opportunity to modify the path taken if it seems appropriate. I strive to be a positive role model, which includes acknowledging my own mistakes. I seek feedback from students and peers regarding the content of my presentations, my persona, and my ability to engage the audience. I also work with other instructors to ensure that my syllabus complements the materials students received in prior classes and prepares them for future classes. As an educator, I continue to reflect upon my knowledge and skills and work to stay current with the latest research and techniques. This enables me to provide students with innovative approaches, up-to-date knowledge, and the newest research findings. I use humor to engage students and encourage dialogue. I share clinical experiences, acknowledge the challenges of balancing personal life with being a professional in the field of social work, and encourage students to recognize the biases they bring to their work.

My goal as a researcher and a professor is to affect change globally. By utilizing my role as a professor, I can influence one student at a time through dialogue and critical thinking emphasizing the value of diversity, personal life experiences, and the unique perspectives of vulnerable people as well as those with power and privilege. My hope is that my students become agents for social change and fight for those whose voices are often not heard.