

Informed by adult learning principles and critical and social justice pedagogy, my teaching philosophy is guided by the principles of empathy, flexibility, and empowerment. As a social work educator, my primary goals are to facilitate students' personal and professional development so that they are equipped to competently serve marginalized communities, challenge inequitable systems, and advocate for social justice. I accomplish these goals through three primary strategies: 1) creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment to foster students' engagement and sense of belonging, 2) scaffolding course content and assignments to strengthen students' capacity to engage with complex issues, and 3) incorporating diverse perspectives to challenge dominant narratives and promote students' critical consciousness.

Rooted in my lived experience as a first-generation college student, my foundational goal as an educator is to create an accessible and inclusive learning environment in which students feel a sense of belonging. Recognizing that students enter the classroom with varying levels of knowledge, confidence, resources, and support related to navigating higher education, I frequently dedicate class time to inform students of on-campus services that exist to support their success, including both academic (e.g., writing center, career services) and holistic (e.g., counseling, disability services) resources. Given that some students may need additional support due to structural barriers or personal circumstances, I provide individualized accommodations, hold supplemental meetings, offer alternate assignments, and extend assignment due dates to assure the course is accessible to students that need additional flexibility to be successful. A key component of inclusivity is accessibility. Earning an Advanced Teaching Certificate from the UT Faculty Innovation Center was integral in building my capacity to design courses and lectures that are accessible to all students. Informed by social justice and universal design for learning principles, I ensure my classes are financially accessible by utilizing free or low-cost materials. To facilitate student engagement with the course, I lead interactive classes by weaving dynamic activities into lectures and tailoring these activities to provide multiple means of engagement to be inclusive of students' varying levels of comfort speaking in class (e.g., think-pair-share, text-based polling, low-stakes writing, *Jeopardy!*). Incorporating these strategies and practices in the learning environment creates a strong foundation for fostering student engagement, promoting meaningful connections, and cultivating a sense of belonging among students.

I use scaffolding techniques with both course content and assignments to facilitate students' learning and enhance their capacity to engage with complex issues. I served as a co-instructor for *Young People and Drugs*, a UT Signature Course specifically designed to introduce first-year undergraduate students to scholarly analysis by focusing on a contemporary issue. This was a virtual synchronous class of 150 students amid the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of content, I organized the first half of the course according to the Bio-Psycho-Social framework which enabled students to learn about the foundational biological, psychological, and social factors of adolescent drug use. Building on this, I dedicated the second half of the course to more complex topics, such as social determinants of health, harm reduction, and drug policy. Further, I encourage students to have an active voice in shaping their learning by reserving the last 1-2 class periods for topics students' express interest in learning more about. I also use scaffolding approaches with course assignments. For example, in the *Young People and Drugs* course, I truncated the major course assignment into four parts that built on one another throughout the semester: a project proposal, a presentation, a paper, and a product (e.g., infographic, social media account, promotional video). This approach initially required substantial individualized support in the early stages of project development, however this decreased over time as students progressed through the course and increased in self-confidence

navigating the course. Further, through this small group-based project, students strengthened their written and verbal communication skills and grew in their professionalism and collaboration abilities.

Critical to social work students' development is the ability to recognize power dynamics and social inequities and take action to promote equity. Informed by Paulo Freire's critical and social justice pedagogy, I use multiple strategies to foster students' critical consciousness. In setting the stage for a course or lecture, I share my positionality as a White cisgender heterosexual woman and openly reflect on how my lived experience, privileges, and biases shape my perspectives and experiences. By modeling openness and introspection, I aim to encourage students to participate in class discussion and motivate students to reflect on their own positionalities and biases. In course materials and content, I elevate diverse perspectives in terms of different social locations, lived experiences, and theoretical perspectives. I do this by intentionally incorporating contributions from individuals underrepresented in academia, including BIPOC and LGBTQ scholars and community activists through an array of materials (i.e., articles, videos, podcasts). I consistently collaborate with community members who have personal or professional experience to present in my classes to ensure students gain an understanding of how course content is relevant to social work practice. For example, when I co-taught the course, *Young People and Drugs*, I invited professionals and community members with lived experience who had expertise in topics covered in the course, including a panel of young adults who shared their recovery journeys, the director of an on-campus anti-stigma initiative who focused on de-stigmatizing addiction, and community activists who discussed local harm reduction policy advocacy efforts. I also ask students to explore diverse perspectives through course assignments. In *Young People and Drugs*, I assigned students to write a research paper that presented both sides of a controversial topic of their choosing related to the social, cultural, and ethical issues of drug use. Student reported this to be a transformative learning experience that challenged their prevailing narratives and cultivated their capacity to embrace multiple diverse viewpoints, a necessary skill in their future careers.

I received excellent feedback from students in the *Young People and Drugs* course about both my pedagogical content and teaching style; my overall rating for the course was 4.6/5. The following evaluative comment demonstrates students' appreciation for my approach to teaching: "*Ms. McCormick was very helpful whenever students had questions and made a clear effort to be as accommodating and understanding as possible which was very helpful with the pandemic going on and classes having to transition to an online format.*"

Given my experience, I am equipped to teach foundational social work courses, such as social justice and human behavior and the social environment. I am also equipped to teach content-specific courses related to ethical dilemmas in social work practice, human services, or community organizing for social change. My practice experiences make me particularly well-suited to teach practice with organizations and communities, theories and methods of group interventions, and social work research. I can also construct my own course on harm reduction philosophy, policy, and practice or community-engaged research. Based on my methodological expertise, I can also teach mixed methods research and program evaluation. However, regardless of the specific course, my primary goal as a social work educator is to foster students' personal and professional growth, empower students to advocate for social justice, and equip students to confidently engage in ethical social work practice across micro, mezzo, and macro realms.