

Teaching Statement | Amy Pei-Lung Yu, MSW

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My teaching philosophy stemmed from a decade of international practice experience in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities. I bring a unique perspective to teaching in that I aim to equip students as culturally responsive service providers, advocates for an accessible and inclusive community, and effective disruptors of systems of power. My primary goal as a social work educator is to create a classroom where all students feel welcome, a safe space where students can be fueled with passion and critical consciousness for social justice. To achieve this goal, my pedagogical approach focuses on 1) fostering a student-centered learning environment; 2) preparing students to engage in social issues and call for change, and 3) integrating cross-cultural, interprofessional perspectives in practice and research.

Fostering a student-centered learning environment. To foster a student-centered learning environment, I approach teaching with humility and respect of students' individual lived experience, positionalities, and intersecting identities. Much like in social work practice, I seek to understand the students' expectations and start where they are at. For example, in my previous work as a professional development trainer, I assessed the needs of different stakeholders (i.e., direct support professionals, parents, administrative staff) prior to the training, and developed workshops that specifically cater to their preferred methods of delivery and learning goals. In many instances, my trainees were practitioners who wanted more hands-on experience, and therefore a large part of my workshops often consisted of role-plays and discussions rather than didactic lectures. Similarly, in the classroom, I would create assignments with flexible structures to accommodate various learning styles and grading schemes in ways that encourage growth.

As a disability researcher and educator, I am committed to teaching inclusive social work practice as evidenced in my explicit curriculum and teaching methods (i.e., creating accessible, screen reader friendly PowerPoints slides, providing course materials in advance, offering choice for types of assignments, and accommodating due dates), and implicit curriculum including providing timely student support, constructive feedback, and appropriate resources. Particularly, I have used these strategies along with the strategies that I learned from the University of Texas at Austin Teaching Preparation Courses in my guest lectures to MSW-level and BSW-level students. I received feedback describing me as engaging, easy to follow, and the materials that I presented as accessible. In the classroom, I welcome students to share and engage as they like, but also acknowledge those who may feel uncomfortable sharing in class and offer other ways of participating. For example, in a class I taught in *Foundations of Social Justice*, I offered the option of private messaging me on Canvas as some students may feel unease about sharing divergent views from other outspoken students in the class. Outside of the classroom, I intend to offer one-on-one mentorship over the course of the semester so that specific needs could be addressed.

Preparing students to engage in social issues and call for change. As an advocate in disrupting systemic ableism, particularly in social work, I aim to engage students in social issues and discussions on working with disabled clients. To develop students' critical consciousness, I seek to connect all topics to systems of power and privilege, and lead conversations that students can carry on beyond the classroom. I strive to make strong connections of what they are learning in class to real-life scenarios, both locally and internationally. For example, in a class that I taught on *Ableism and Disability Inclusion*, I incorporated overview of concepts on ableism and disability, small group discussions about structural microaggressions and how they are related to ableism and what can students do about them as social workers. Several students wrote in the evaluation that they felt the discussion was thought-provoking and powerful, particularly on the socially constructed ideas of normality and experiencing ableism without being disabled.

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Most students enroll in social work education because they want to make a difference to the lives around them. I believe passion is crucial for a social worker, and therefore I will encourage students to find clarity in their motivation for seeking social work education and their desire for social change. I will utilize various teaching methods that encourage ongoing reflexivity and experiential learning so that students will develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others. As some of these activities may require certain level of vulnerability, I will make such activities private or only shared with me. For example, having students record a short video of themselves articulating their views on social issues at the beginning of the course and have them review it again and comment on it at the end of the course. While a good balance of theory and application in the classroom is critical for students to live out social work values, I believe students must also learn to take care of themselves first in order to provide responsive services to others and advocate on their behalf. As such, I will offer process journaling (either written, video, or visual art) as a bonus points assignment to encourage self-reflection on topics and issues discussed in class.

Integrating cross-cultural, interprofessional perspectives in practice and research

Drawing on my wealth of experience working with varying cultures and professionals, my pedagogical approach emphasizes on building students' capacity to work in complex settings with cross-cultural, interprofessional perspectives. For example, most of my previous work focused on culturally adapting evidence-based models for local community organizations in Taiwan and translating research into practice specifically for the local language and culture in seminars and workshops. These experiences enabled me to work successfully in an interprofessional team and with these skills, I am capable of equipping my students as effective social workers working alongside with other professionals across cultures. For example, in a class that I have taught for three years consecutively for The Autism Consortium of Texas (ACT) LEND on the topic of *Quality of Life for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, I often draw on my previous cross-cultural international professional experiences as examples. Students were often intrigued by my unique experience overseas and a few of them have even stayed after class to talk to me and learn more about working in the disability field internationally. In addition, to create a robust conversation in this class, I have collaborated with an autistic self-advocate on the development of the class content (history, concepts, research findings) and complimented the lecture with his lived experience. I have also worked with student leaders assigned to the class to help them facilitate the student discussions by clarifying the content and brainstorming ideas for activities. Students have also attested that the inclusion of diverse stakeholders in the class was incredibly helpful in understanding of the topic/issue comprehensively. As such, in moving forward, I plan to invite inter-disciplinary and inter-professional guest presenters from various cultural/ethnic backgrounds, clients (or family members), and self-advocates to facilitate the topic of the week whenever appropriate, international literature, so that students gain a holistic, global perspective of the topic.

As someone who has lived and studied in Canada, Taiwan, South Korea, and the United States, and has been working with culturally diverse individuals with disabilities and their families, I am deeply appreciative of diversity and humbled by the wealth of knowledge that I continue to learn from others. Teaching is a privilege that I do not take lightly. I believe that good teaching comes from reciprocal learning, and with that, I am confident in my ability to equip students as culturally responsive professionals and effective advocates for social justice.