

Kathryn Ricketts – Teaching Philosophy

My course design and delivery, whether on a graduate or undergraduate level, are always grounded in dance/theatre/visual arts practices. Leading with embodied principles and practices requires sensitivity and nimbleness in fostering appreciation, relevance, and accessibility; and I am now recognized for this expertise with ongoing requests to serve as consultant, writer, jury member and guest teacher. I strive to cultivate dynamic and imaginative spaces where the body at play, with all abilities and challenges, becomes the most critical tool for transformative learning across all subject areas. My intention is to move education onto a horizontal plane of exchange and empathy rather than a vertical plane of transmission, and the reciprocal nature of this approach allows for vibrant explorations with self-invested learners who become connected to and responsible for their immediate, local and global community.

Although my teaching has been influenced by an interdisciplinary practice in movement, visual arts and theater, I have understood through the culmination of my art practice within curriculum, literacy, culture and disability studies, that my work crosses disciplines with relevance and ease and bridges the sometimes polarizations of theory/method/practice through multi modal approaches.

My teaching practice covers a broad scope: from pre-school to high school and from pre-service to in-service teachers. In addition to this, for the past seventeen years, with post-secondary, both undergraduate and graduate, in universities and colleges. I have built a range of capacities within curriculum design, delivery, analysis and assessment. This is evidenced with my work in the Teaching and Learning Centre where I consulted faculty in innovative curriculum strategies from playful integrations of technology to dynamic embodied delivery models to effective assessment systems. To this end, I designed and delivered the Graduate Certificate Program in Teaching and Learning at the UofR focused on developing competencies in design and delivery of writing and theory classes from seminar size to large lectures, ensuring optimal engagement and impact.

In addition to this I have envisioned, implemented and directed a dance department in a Performing Arts College in Denmark as well as a three-year accredited Dance Conservatory in Vancouver of which I directed for eleven years. These leadership positions were underpinned with a focus on reflexivity, curiosity and inquiry as stance committed to remaining pedagogically current.

My focus is to cultivate an environment whereby personal voice is fostered and empowered with a collective amplification through deep listening, mindful response and crafted suggestions for further growth. Mirochnik (2002) states the importance of integrity in this process, “Caring in this process implies phenomenological ethics, an ability to use one’s own experience to gauge the quality of another person’s experience so as to maintain integrity and to avoid violation” (p. 159). I believe that understanding how the students process information, getting a sense of how they view the world, and knowing them as unique individuals is critical in enabling them to flourish in their learning. The teacher must also be able to translate and transform what is to be learned in a meaningful way that is congruent with and reflective of the students’ own unique learning style.

My interest is to integrate and innovate ground breaking practices focusing on embodied understanding of voice, identity and citizenship. We are in a time that breeds innovation and unexpected partnerships and collaborations in spite of our global challenges. Although this is applauded, as a strong and sensitive teacher continuing to practice curiosity and humility, I will also advocate teaching that holds fast to values that are aligned with strong citizenship, a value that is timeless.