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Teaching Philosophy (a document in process)

As a person who has been schooled primarily at large research universities, but who has taught primarily at small, liberal arts colleges I have developed a teaching philosophy that incorporates the best aspects of these two different types of educational institutions. I very much believe in the broad, well-rounded education that liberal arts colleges stress, and the underlying premise that college is just the beginning of lifetime spent in pursuit of knowledge that enriches us as human beings. At the same time, I understand that most students come to college for practical reasons. They see college as an investment, and graduation as a goal that, once achieved, will lead to vastly superior career opportunities. Not only do I see a connection between these two seemingly disparate views, but I reconcile them in my teaching. I believe that a broad, liberal arts education is the best preparation for a rewarding career.

In my professional life, this philosophy has both brought me to, and kept me in Communications departments. Communication is fundamental to the liberal arts mission, but it is also a discipline with a broad range of professional pathways. It is both a frustrating and exciting reality of the discipline that those professional paths are always in flux. As a professional field, communications evolves rapidly. Every ten years a new set of job opportunities arises, while some previously established career paths fade into obscurity. This is precisely why the liberal arts approach is so well suited to the Communications discipline. Graduates who earned journalism degrees in the 1990s must reinvent themselves for the era of Journalism 2.0. Those who trained in broadcasting a decade ago need to relearn their craft for the age of narrowcasting with digital tools. Advertisers and Public Relations professionals are seeing their jobs transformed by revolutions in social media. As a communications professor with a liberal arts philosophy I prepare my students for these changes. I devise assignments that emphasize creative approaches to problem solving and collaborative effort. I teach skills that are transferable, instructing my students that they don't need to specialize in software. They just need to learn what is necessary to finish their project. Software quickly becomes obsolete, but there is a constant demand for creative problem solvers. Finally, I focus on media literacy as a fundamental skill that my students gain in all of my courses. I see literacy as a balance of production and consumption skills that transcends any particular medium. In the medium of print, students must be able to read (consume) and write (produce) to be considered literate. Just as knowledge of writing makes students more critically engaged readers, knowledge of video production makes students more critical consumers of a broad range of audio-visual screen media. Each of my courses includes exercises that improve media production and critical consumption skills.

I have had a wide variety of teaching experiences. I began by teaching writing, then English, primarily for conversation in the Japanese public school system. I have a background in comparative literature, and, for ten years, have been employed by Communications departments. My commitment to teaching has been the most consistent aspect of my professional life. Teaching is my calling and throughout my career, I have made it my priority.