

I can summarize my teaching philosophy into two words: **curiosity** and **reciprocity**. By being curious, we ask questions and dive deep into our material, searching for connections between what we already know and what we set out to learn. This is the foundation of **meaningful learning**. We bolster reciprocal relationships via mutual respect, explicit expectations, and direct communication. **I foster a co-created learning environment where meaningful learning activities support students' creativity.**

I am interested in meaningful learning as a way to embrace diversity in my classroom. Every student has different experiences that shape the way they connect with new information. I could try to connect my course content to my students directly—but, this may fall flat unless I understand what each student brings to the classroom. Instead, I seek to facilitate their meaning-making, inviting students to reflect upon their life experiences, connect with course material, and share what they feel comfortable with. I am curious about my students and their experiences, but I do not require that they share those kinds of personal details with me. For example, in an assessment focused on insects that negatively impact forest health, I included a short essay prompt: “Describe either 1) a forest pest insect that you have encountered, including when, where, and some of your experiences, or 2) a forest pest insect that you are curious about.” Through this brief prompt, students shared with me some of their childhood experiences, their favorite paths through the woods in their hometowns, and details from summer internships. This kind of exercise has students explicitly connecting with ideas from class, and allows me to learn more about them as people. It illuminates hidden diversity in my classroom, beyond race and gender expression. I believe that if I truly want to be an inclusive teacher, I need to find a way (or a few ways!) for all students to connect to course material.

Reciprocity empowers students and keeps us all accountable. I like to make my expectations clear so that all students have the opportunity to succeed. In a similar way, I explicitly tell students what they can expect from me, and I like to spark a discussion that allows us to draft community standards as a group. Between my students and I, we can expect many of the same things from each other: that we come to class prepared (to teach or to learn), that we show mutual respect, that we communicate clearly. These standards, along with others that we agree upon as a classroom community, bolster an inclusive learning environment.