

I am dedicated to teaching as a vocation because I believe undergraduate education can be transformational and empowering. I have pursued pedagogical training through university courses and professional development, practiced the craft of teaching in twelve courses—two as an Instructor of Record, and advised students in mentorships and research apprenticeships. In recognition of my efforts and high evaluations, I earned a Teaching Award in Sociology, and I've been appointed as Sociology's Senior TA, a University Teaching Consultant, and an Undergraduate Curriculum Assessor.

I approach teaching with an ideological commitment to foster intellectual thought and a pragmatic commitment to prepare students for their careers. As students become global citizens in a flexible economy, I want them to feel convicted, competent, adaptable, and agentic, with multiple interests and skills. In my evaluations students consistently report that my courses are challenging, but 100% recommend me. My teaching philosophy is characterized by **intentionality** and **investment**. This means that I am invested in the intellectual growth and success of my students and that I intend every aspect of my course to serve a pedagogical purpose. I enact my philosophy through **active learning**, through which students feel ownership over and connection to their education. The expectations that I set are high, but so is my responsibility to equip students to meet them. As one student commented, “[*Economy and Society*] can get confusing, but if you have someone like Lindsay teaching it, it really helps the learning process.” Another reported, “We really had to work hard to succeed in [*Field Methods*], but I learned a lot and I really enjoyed [it]. I learned a lot about myself and how hard carrying out research is.” By being invested and intentional in my class design I show students that I take their education seriously, and I tell them I hope they do, too.

I intentionally help students connect course content to their social worlds and think more critically through using current events, choice, and personal experience. For example, in my course *Economy and Society*, I provided students with six Planet Money podcast episodes, and had them choose one to analyze in their final paper. I used media stories from the Lottery's ‘Powerball Bonanza’—as it was called—to teach students conflict and order perspectives, I had students bring in election propaganda mailers to discuss social construction, and I used the Patriots' well-publicized Super Bowl “deflate-gate” to teach about deviance. For more difficult concepts I rely on theories of learning which recommend starting with a familiar concept to help scaffold understanding of a new concept. For example, in *Economy and Society* we discussed the performance of gender at length before making the leap to economic performativity. In the same course, we discussed the phenomenon of student debt—intimately familiar to many of them—before delving into the debt related causes and consequences of the 2008 economic crisis.

I am also intentional to promote active learning. I do not lecture for more than 15 minutes before engaging the class with an image, clicker question, media clip, free-write, or group activity such as a think-pair-share. I also look for opportunities to bring in guest lecturers. For example, while teaching about access and power in field research I invited a colleague to discuss her challenges studying medical doctors. I continually ask for feedback and collect formal data two times per quarter, which help me learn which lesson plans or activities are effective. After observing my class, a teaching mentor wrote, “It was clear that every moment in the class is carefully timed and well-thought in order to make the most of the class period and keep the students' attention. I appreciated how much forward thought and planning went into Lindsay's class, and I think it is clear that her students do too.” One student reported, “Lindsay combines the perfect amount of lecture/discussion time. Class flows smoothly and encourages retention of information.” Furthermore, my assignments are designed for iterative learning that accommodates feedback and growth. Every assignment helps build skills necessary for the exams. As students said, “The papers we [wrote] prior to finals were a great way to help students analyze for the upcoming final” and “[the short papers] were helpful to stay on top of our work and our research. I believe these...really helped for the presentation...and the final paper.”

A final way I intentionally invest in student success is by encouraging students to be engaged. I am an advocate of communication; on my end this means communicating content and expectations, on their end this means asking questions, following up for clarification, and attempting answers. Confusion and failure are actively welcomed in my classroom as part of the learning process. I tell my students that I always have questions as I learn and that learning—by definition—means working through content that one does not yet understand. Students testify, *“Professor DePalma was incredible. She gave great feedback and she was there to answer any question. She worked hard providing us with things we needed to do well. She was always making sure that the students understood what was happening and what she was asking of us. She was very clear”*; *“The course material was difficult and extensive, and she really helped simplify things. She did a great job helping us learn and grow in this class.”*

One strategy to help students engage is by having them participate. Poll questions enable students to report and defend answers, and jigsaw activities allow students to gain expertise in a small group before teaching their peers in new groups comprised of individuals who mastered different content in the first group. A particularly popular activity is practicing ethnographic observation outside, followed by comparing field-notes with a partner to analyze how positionality can shape data. Rather than being told, students can see it. Another effective activity involves collecting anonymous raw data from the class to create descriptive statistics and crosstabs. I look for any opportunity for students to apply what they are learning, which is one reason why I particularly love teaching methods and capstone courses, and why I look forward to designing future courses with community engagement.

Though my investment in student learning means that I care about students’ academic success, I also convey that I see them as whole humans and care about their general success, too. The rapport I build makes them more comfortable to participate in class, or to privately divulge personal struggles or structural barriers that are interfering with coursework. Students refer to me as *“always available,” “easy to talk to,” “always very helpful,”* and an *“amazing professor [who] clearly shows compassion and diligence towards helping her students.”* In office hours students have shared struggles including immigration status, family conflicts, mental illness, and financial stress. When I was a student, I lost my stepmom to a long and agonizing battle with melanoma. I often tell my students this to encourage them that I know that there is life outside my classroom, and that sometimes life makes coursework or attendance difficult. In most cases I am able to work with the student to get them back on track, but in all cases students thank me for caring, and opening lines for communication. As a teaching mentor summarized, *“it is clear that Lindsay is approachable and cares about the students’ experiences in her class; so while she has authority she is not authoritative.”*

On the first day of class I tell my students that it is my sincere goal that the course changes them. I believe in the power of the college classroom to fundamentally affect a student’s life because it changed the trajectory of mine. Though few will end up pursuing a graduate degree like I did, I measure my success as an educator by the things my students take with them as they leave my classroom. It will be a pleasure and a privilege to continue a career in which I can improve undergraduate education, design creative and effective courses, and interact with, challenge, and empower students.