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INTRODUCTION

As a professional environmental communicator, I view every day as a teaching opportunity, from the traditional classroom to training workshops to event presentations in the local community. In each context, I strive to bring my learner-centered teaching style to participants in order to inspire both new ideas and thinking strategies in future jobs and studies.

TRAINING

Communication Training
Coursework
University of West Florida

Community Based
Environmental Management
Certificate
Duke University

Natural Resources Leadership
Institute Fellowship
University of Florida

ERIKA ZAMBELLO

Teaching Philosophy

I view teaching as both a gift and a responsibility, with the ultimate goal of creating novel points of view within previously held ideas as well as changes in thinking skills. I do not undertake teaching on a whim or as a force of habit, but view the experience as an exciting journey taken with students and marked by humility, creativity, and passion. After each presentation, workshop, or course, students should change the way they see the world in some small way.

I do not want to be a friend or compatriot of my students, but carry myself as someone in whom they can see themselves within 5-10 years. I remain relatable, but professional, operating as "Ms. Zambello" to all but my closest colleagues. Furthermore, I provide my background and journey to all students not so they see me as an expert, but in order to understand my frame of reference for the course material as well as my biases.

IN THE CLASSROOM

In the 21st century, people of all ages seek to absorb information from a wide variety of sources and mediums. As a result, I use photography, videos, graphic design, and miniature quizzes to maintain interest and engagement with my students and audience. Even in lecture situations, I only speak for 15-20 minutes at any one stretch before involving participants in a video or activities.

I have specific goals for student grades and assessments, where appropriate. Because recall of most information is available at their fingertips with a simple Google search, I am interested in inspiring not rote learning of facts, but critical thinking through reflection, persuasion, and real world-based projects. Instead of exams with multiple choice or short answer questions, I provide space for deep thinking in essays, op-eds, or first-person reflection. Additionally, when in the traditional classroom I offer guidance and resources for initiatives that students can draw on in their future careers, including portfolio-building press releases, business plans, websites. Moreover, I work to elucidate in each student more abstract values they can then bring to conflict and issue-based prioritization across fields of study.

EXPECTATIONS

As an instructor, I will never:

- Mock a student with genuine questions and interest in learning.
- Bring outside conflict or issues into the classroom (this includes cell phone use).
- Demand my perspective be replicated in my students' work.

As a result, I have high expectations of students and participants as well. They shall:

- Devote their attention to the subject at hand (again, no cell phones).
- Keep an open mind and take intellectual risks.
- Knowing that I carefully select at-home work to facilitate in-classroom learning, come to each class prepared.
- Be hard on the issues we discuss, but soft on the people, and respect each fellow student and participant.

MY EXPERIENCE

I believe preparation is critical to success in the classroom, and I have studied conflict resolution intensively through both a Community Based Environmental Management certificate at Duke University, as well as a fellowship through the Natural Resources Leadership Institute at the University of Florida. To further hone my skills, I completed coursework in Communications Training at the University of West Florida (UWF), where I facilitated a workshop at the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance and taught a full class to my graduate student contemporaries. Additionally, I have instructed multiple UWF class sessions at the undergraduate level as part of the Writing for Communications Professionals curriculum.

I view learning as a continual, life-long process. Ongoing learning inspires new insights into my own work, and as a result I continue to challenge myself through additional course study and training in both communication and teaching. I love speaking in public, and by taking as many outreach opportunities as possible I have become adept at educating in a range of landscapes, including chambers of commerce, restaurants, public meetings, and more. I continue to pursue new learning avenues for myself so the line in my own life between "teacher" and "student" remains blurred. I am empathetic to my students because I still see myself as one!

**"GOOD TEACHING IS MORE A GIVING OF RIGHT QUESTIONS
THAN A GIVING OF RIGHT ANSWERS."**

~JOSEPH ALBERS