

## Shelly Volsche, PhD

### *Teaching Philosophy*

“Why” and “how” are central to my philosophy on teaching and learning. Whenever I engage with students and other faculty, I consider what I can learn as well as what I can share. Because of this, I have developed the following philosophies about our most common interactions on campus:

**Classroom and Lecture Hall:** We often discuss teacher-centric versus student-centric pedagogy, but I strive instead to build community by focusing on what the content can teach all of us. I want discussions to grow organically, such that I moderate and guide discussions more than I lead lectures. This is because I believe the best learning comes from doing.

Pedagogically, I engage in a wide variety of techniques, from Socratic discussions to small group work such as think-pair-share. I utilize problem-based learning to empower even first-year students to take charge of their learning and engage with the content. One of my most popular activities in class involves students in a discussion of material culture using items from their own backpacks.

Using Bloom’s Taxonomy, I provide students with a road map for their learning in my course. I begin by making sure students understand broad concepts and the goal of the course, later utilizing the details of textbook, assigned journal readings, and other media formats as a means of comprehending and solidifying these concepts. In this way, I ensure that students are learning the material on an applicable level. Not every student in my class will become an anthropologist, but each leaves my class with a basic understanding of how to see the world through an anthropological lens – and an appreciation of why this is valuable to their future careers.

**Research:** Without research, what do we have to teach? As a perpetual student of the world, I want to continue developing and answering questions that are relevant to our current and future concerns. Students inform this process by sharing their interests and questions regarding the world around them. It is often from class conversations and engaging students outside the class (i.e., office hours, hallway conversations) that research questions relevant to the future become clear.

Likewise, involving students in research can provide opportunities to implement the metacognitive processes we encourage in the classroom. By participating in the research process students cultivate the knowledge and long-term skillset needed for careers in all fields, whether inside or outside the academe.

**Service:** Teaching opens doors to service through the application of service-learning projects. By engaging students in a more immediate application of their knowledge, a deeper understanding of the content and its value results. Accordingly, service as a faculty member sets an example of one’s willingness to engage in the community and participate in campus-wide initiatives to benefit all.

Research, teaching, and service are interconnected in the academic life. I believe it is my job as a professor to involve students in these endeavors so that they can begin to grow as members of their community. I embarked upon my academic path because of conversations, coursework, and research opportunities provided to me during my undergraduate career. I value the interchange of diverse ideas, questions, and experiences among students, faculty, and staff in the university setting. It is in this space that the greatest teaching occurs.