

## Statement of Philosophy

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My teaching is grounded in the principles of *Ubuntu*, 'I am because we are,' which entails community building and *omolúwàbí*, which entails values of kindness, courage, and accountability. These commitments, shaped by my journey as a Nigerian-born, first-generation college student and English-language learner, inform how I build inclusive, engaging classrooms where students' voices are centered.

***Ubuntu, the act of community building:*** I cultivate classrooms where community-building, trust, multilingualism, and equity are not add-ons but the foundation of learning. My goal is to prepare students, especially future educators, to become leaders who see teaching as a practice of community-building. I approach teaching as an activity one engages with to understand the word and the world with others. I am dedicated to creating an environment where all students embrace their learning journey and the process of becoming, thereby finding authenticity in themselves, taking ownership of their learning, and engaging in caring praxis as a community. The value of community building and care lies in respecting people's preferences and making them feel comfortable. To do this, I state in the syllabus and reiterate on the first day of class that I am available to meet students in the spaces where they feel most comfortable. I once held office hours at Raising Cane's on Grand River in East Lansing because a first-year student identified it as a safe, welcoming environment for conversation. I am also dedicated to continuing to grow in my journey of fostering community building in society beyond the classroom. The effectiveness of the community-building strategy is that students affirmed this approach in evaluations, noting that they were not tense about meeting in the office and that their needs were centered especially because of the zoom or campus walk option of office hours. Similarly, in Spring and Fall 2023, I encouraged Chinese-speaking students to use Mandarin in class. These strategies of meeting at Raising Canes and also allowing Chinese-speaking students use their language are effective because my students felt seen and valued which fostered greater engagement and a sense of freedom. One student shared in their evaluation that "*this is my first time using my Chinese name since I got to MSU and I appreciate it alot.*"

***Omolúwàbí:*** As a student-parent, I learned that the *omolúwàbí* trait means I am accountable to myself and my students. Hence, I provide students with space to be accountable to themselves and their learning journey through flexible deadlines, incorporating assignment flexibility into my course schedule/reading/assignment due dates. A flexible approach is how I organized a field trip to the Broad Art Museum mid-semester to account for our learning goal, as requested by the students. This is because I ensure I am responsive and available to students, provide equitable support, empower through education, and engage in reflective practices, all within the purview of humanizing pedagogy.

The approach of community building, care, and accountability in the form of flexibility is effective because of how students felt valued, as noted in their evaluation. The flexible deadline was not entirely effective, as students sometimes ignore weekly readings and engage in other activities, such as shopping on their computers in class. I made a modification by walking around during class, and instead of uploading the slide prior to class, I uploaded it after, which limited their use of the computer. I use QR codes for links, and I also started a challenge that if everyone submits their weekly reading and engages in class for three consecutive times, they will win themselves a pizza party in the fourth class. This has worked once and I am currently doing that again in my class this Fall 2025. They have had two weeks of complete submission and engagement. They have one more week and then the pizza party. Thus, *Ubuntu* and *omolúwàbí* philosophy have been an approach that I embrace to engage my students.