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Teaching Philosophy

The three components of student success that define and direct my teaching philosophy are respect, accountability, and enjoyment. The essential functions of this focus are multiple opportunities to engage students and relate course content and materials to their ideas, interests, and experiences. My teaching revolves around the instruction and development of students' individual learning and writing skills in discussion and research, so they leave my classroom ready to apply those skills in other courses of their education and their careers. Accordingly, as a teacher and a historian, I strive to provide a respectful, engaging, and exciting learning environment, from the classroom to individual meetings with students, and their coursework.

Student ideas are respected, just as they are expected to respect my presentations, and as a result I intend students to understand how knowledge in historical research and analysis can be applied to goals outside the classroom and in their careers. Principally, I feel that history allows students to productively pursue interests in educational and career goals through instruction on research topics and materials that require discussion and analysis. My classroom is constructed around an open discussion format, with lectures and presentations complimenting assigned readings. Students are assigned readings of primary documents like Abigail Adams's "Remember the Ladies" letter to her husband John from March 31, 1776, Frederick Douglass's "Fourth of July" Speech delivered to a group of abolitionists in Rochester, New York, on July 5, 1852, and President Roosevelt's "Arsenal of Democracy" fireside chat delivered on December 29, 1940. These documents invite my students to ask questions and connect those sources to lecture material, while I assign written papers and questions that instruct them to analyze and express their interpretations of those materials. Gaining insight into what students find interesting in those

materials creates opportunities for them to think about the value of their understanding and interpretations. This additionally allows students to connect their modern experiences with the historical topics and events we explore and generates research for their analytical development.

Bringing research into the classroom demonstrates accountability for students and indicates how it informs my teaching and understanding. Additionally, expressing optimism about learning through research and sharing ideas demonstrates our individual and collective accountability for success in the classroom and college. That is particularly important for attendance, and I stress that a simple act is a valuable tool for success, alongside expectations that the classroom is a welcoming environment. I work to give students the motivation to return to class because they are invited and excited about our learning. For example, in my Spring 2026 Dual-Credit sections, I pushed students to develop their answers to questions about a speech by President FDR ahead of a class meeting and a quiz. In particular, I encouraged them to go beyond a minimum review and really identify phrases and comments that they find particularly useful to understanding the context of the time period. In this exercise they were assigned three sources to focus on, FDR's first inaugural address from 1933, his sixth fireside chat from September 30, 1934, and the previously highlighted "Arsenal of Democracy" fireside chat. Context was key, and I urged the students to think about what made FDR, his audience, and the message delivered significant, at those moments and in the time that spanned between the speeches. The timing proved critical to give my students an opportunity to connect his historical discussion points with recent events, without relying too heavily on our modern experience. The instructions and assignment given revolved around President Donald Trump's 2026 State of the Union Address, providing an outlet where students compared messaging in their experience with historical counterparts in the Depression era, and then express how they find it useful to understand specific historical events.

Finally, I am committed to bringing joy into my classroom, built upon a careful integration of teaching methods that facilitate and engage diverse learning styles. Thinking about the recent example for my Dual-Credit classes in Spring 2026, and including online versions in the same semester, I encouraged my students to identify what they have enjoyed about a presentation or found challenging. Online students noted that while my recorded lecture presentations are lengthy (35-90 minutes), they found an enthusiasm in my delivery and encouragement in how I present all developments. One student reported that despite the gravity of the Great Depression, my delivery remained optimistic as I presented the history of efforts to affect responses and recovery in that era of American history. In-person, I strive to create a classroom that is respectful, engaging, and exciting, and I actively endeavor to bring learning directly to students, so they gain more than listening to me passively. With an example like the Great Depression, that gives us a direct chance to apply financial issues to historical Americans so that students find a relatable connection to their everyday. Achieving these goals allows students to take the skills and knowledge they learn with me out into their lives. When students leave my classroom, I want them to value the knowledge gained and apply the processes learned in my classroom to their interests just as I sought in my education.

From my undergraduate degree through my Ph.D. dissertation, I longed to share my interests in history with other students and my teachers. The first history courses I took at Texas Tech pushed me to pursue teaching and share my interest in history with students, fellow teachers, and historians. Teaching provided an opportunity to adapt my philosophy and enhance my focus and knowledge on engagement and student success. With experience, I know students' ideas are crucial to the discussion of history, and respect for shared ideas by everyone in the classroom and the content we are looking at generates success.