

Statement of Teaching Philosophy
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Great teachers have enriched my entire life, giving me access to a community of learning, to a fellowship of ideas, and to the society of students who fill my working days with challenge, curiosity, and humor. What every student has in common is that each has undertaken a process designed to challenge and to change him. As an educator, I am primarily committed to two principles: to meeting students where they are, and to offering them, through the content and structure of the course and through their interactions in the classroom, a sense of the wealth of human experience and achievement in language, in ideas, and in literature.

Often students are resistant to a foreign language class conducted entirely in the target language. The methodologies that I implement, though, break through that resistance quickly. Beginning learners use Spanish consistently from the first day of class, and the classroom is always centered on their own use of language, not 'teacher talk.' Students converse, exchange information, and even joke with each other in Spanish within the first weeks of language acquisition. Their learning truly is a process of acquisition – *ownership* – rather than memorization of disposable grammar points. Throughout all levels of a language sequence I integrate cultural components, literary and journalistic texts, and works of visual. These serve not merely as linguistic exercises, but to expand students' cultural horizons. Their world thus becomes larger and more diverse, and they themselves become at once more appreciative, and more critical of it.

In teaching literature, I encourage students to approach literary works with incisive attention and critical understanding that they can turn to their own, immediate experience. My role in the classroom is not that of lecturer. Rather, my students to bring their own questions to each class. Class time allows them to pose those questions and to answer them in collaborative discussion and debate. Critical attention to literature leads my students to ask of themselves the same questions they learn to ask of texts, narrators, and authors: How do we organize our world? How do we construct a meaningful place for ourselves within a nexus of competing social, political, cultural, and spiritual claims and pressures? How do the stories we tell and treasure anchor us?

Earl Shorris founded the Clemente Course in the Humanities on the model of the "great books" tradition of Columbia University for delivery to the most disadvantaged of the urban poor. Shorris felt that the study of the humanities would engender the self-reflection that provides an entrance to political life, to the experience of self-as-citizen, and to responsible engagement with the wider community of citizens that is the neighborhood, the city, the state, the nation. I share Shorris's faith, and am committed to enabling my students to become exemplary members of a diversity of intersecting communities, to become fully engaged in all of them as citizens and leaders, and so, to recognize, question, and reconcile the competing interests and agendas that pull at the fibers that sew our own worlds -- social, cultural, professional, and political -- together.