

Teaching Statement: Firasat Jabeen

My teaching favors a participatory approach along with a studio class format. Given the diverse group of students—belonging to various ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities—in my classrooms at the Forman Christian College (FCC), I always feel it important to use a participatory approach to boost students from underrepresented groups. For this purpose, I prefer a studio teaching format along with lectures. For example, in the teaching of courses like communication theories, peace journalism, and media culture, and society, etc., I divide my students in groups (something that I have continued in online teaching by creating breakout rooms on Zoom) and let them discuss various approaches in theories, cultural studies, and research. This has always encouraged collaborative and cooperative learning. Sometimes, students, who would earlier be silent or seem uninterested in the course content would become involved in interactive engagement. Especially some female students who would otherwise participate less in class activities would become more confident leading discussions and serving as group organizers. With this teaching approach, the majority of students tend to feel at ease and more confident in sharing and reflecting on the topics of discussion.

One teaching method I find intriguing is engaging students in teamwork. Engaging them in group discussions and assigning them to work on class projects in small groups achieves considerable results in terms of their class performances. For example, in the teaching of international communication, I constitute groups of students and assign each group to share well-researched insights on the functioning of transnational media corporations in the form of class presentations, discussions, and assignments. This helps them understand the functioning of different media corporations in terms of comparative analysis. Not only this, such class activities and assignments have been helpful for students in establishing arguments about the functioning and role of international media organizations in developed and developing countries. Additionally, such class exercises are useful to figure out ongoing trends of media conglomeration in a periphery country such as Pakistan. Encouraging students to collaborate through promoting teamwork assignments, I support them in situating their observations of media functioning in terms of conglomeration in the theoretical apparatuses of hegemony and dependency theories. Thus, I prefer approaching theoretical and abstract concepts through observation and interaction where they get to share and learn from one another.

Considering the fact that the majority of problems that Pakistan is currently suffering from can better be approached through awareness and education, I attempt to inculcate civic and global engagement in my students. For me, a part of this civic responsibility essentially means how to respond to problems related to conflicts in multicultural and multiethnic contexts. In my teaching experience of media, culture, and society, I engage students in class room activities and have them analyze media content from national and international media channels. Students then further examine the content according to the perspectives discussed in class and course readings. This exercise has two significant merits: (i) in-class practice of rhetorical analysis of a particular content, and (ii) encouragement related to the value of diversity and an equity-driven environment. Throughout my experiences of teaching this course, the interest and enthusiasm of students reflected that they not only aspire to become productive, caring, and responsible citizens but also employ innovative ideas to offer solutions to the problems within given resources.

In order to make a dynamic and engaging learning environment, I prefer an integrative approach whereby I encourage students to work on a diverse array of topics for their assignments using multiple tools and new technologies. For example, in the class of international communication, I ask students to choose a topic of their interest for class presentation and then take ten pictures that best describe the topic they choose. For their presentation, I ask them to craft appealing captions along with organizing the photos in a sequence that effectively describes the topic under discussion/study. In my experience, such class practices not only spark students' interests in social issues but also enhance their creativity and critical thinking abilities. Additionally, in these classes, students' creativity, confidence, and interest has revealed that they are more enthusiastic in exhibiting their thoughts when engaged in real life problems and the visual images related to those problems. For the assessment of students' performance, my rubric entails components that evaluate students for high order thinking, knowledge application, argument building, and creativity.

Cognizant of the fact that different students might have different needs and expectations, I always practice the habit of circulating index cards around the middle of semester wherein I ask my students to give me anonymous feedback on my teaching. In my experience, most students appreciate the participatory approach as it allows and encourages an active learning process. Several of my students have commented on the benefits of interactive approach in the class and have shown greater interest in the course content. To refine and improve my teaching skills, I actively participate in the training workshops and sessions offered by the Center for Learning and Teaching at FCC. Furthermore, to hone my online teaching abilities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been participating in several virtual events offered by my university and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan. As a teacher, my goal is always to empower—both academically and professionally—my students, and to foster civic and global engagement. Thus, together my students and I create a conducive and congenial learning environment in my classes.