

I began teaching almost twenty years ago, while a high school student in Mexico. It was then that I discovered my love for teaching and its potential to transform the lives of both students and teachers. These two aspects have become the driving forces of my teaching. UIC I has provided a fruitful environment to advance my teaching skills and to participate in improving the academic opportunities in inner city communities. My experience has been rewarding and edifying. Students also have recognized this, awarding me the School of Public Health's "Golden Apple Award for Teaching Excellence" (2002).

My teaching philosophy rests on four elements. First, I set challenging goals for both students and myself. I assume that graduate students are self-motivated, independent thinkers. Hence, I strive to create a space for them to develop their academic interests through challenging readings, projects, group discussions, and individual meetings. I make myself available to students after class through both scheduled office hours and an open door policy. I also emphasize the value of high quality work and professional responsibility (over grades) by providing constant feedback on their course work.

Second, I believe in the effectiveness of action-oriented and participatory learning. For instance, my Community Organizing course is based on group discussions and a field project that students work on during the semester. Students also have to facilitate a class session and participate on several small group exercises. Students develop their own thinking through these activities, applying assigned readings and learning from their classmates. In my other class, Health Education and Promotion, students frequently work in small groups to discuss a specific reading, or solve a case study. In addition, I encourage participation in my classes by requiring students to submit a set of questions based on assigned material before each class. These questions, then, may be used as the basis for our class discussion.

Third, I value diversity in and outside of the classroom. I see diversity not only as based on gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity but also on professional experiences and theoretical perspectives. I promote diversity with: a) Discussions of diversity are included in every topic or session; diversity is not treated as separate and independent topic. b) Examples used in class are aimed at reflecting the diversity of peoples in our society. c) As relevant, invited guests are members of a minority ethnic group. d) For

field projects, students collaborate with community-based organizations that work with minority populations. e) To the extent possible, assigned readings include feminist, ethnic, queer, international, and critical perspectives. f) Students are encouraged to think and speak beyond the popular, politically-correct discourse.

Finally, I view teaching as complementary to my research and public service. My two courses are closely related to my research activities (e.g., community organizing and involvement, and health promotion theories) and community service. This allows me to bring examples from my own research and service into the classroom, as well as to further my own thinking through classrooms discussions. For instance, in both courses I always include a presentation of findings from my studies. In addition, I provide educational opportunities to some students through my research and the organizations with which I collaborate.

Over the last five years, I have developed and taught two courses: Community Organizing for Health, and Health Education and Health Promotion. The first is an elective course for advanced students in the Behavioral Sciences and Health Promotion track while the second is a divisional requirement. The former is structured as a seminar with a fieldwork component. Although students have constantly given high marks to that course, some find it very demanding. In response, I have reduced the amount of reading by about twenty percent. Similarly, I continue updating the content of the Health Education and Health Promotion course to ensure that it meets students' needs and includes the latest advances from the field.

My teaching plans include developing another advanced graduate level course within the Behavioral Sciences and Health Promotion track. Based on my experiences with students and my academic interests, this course would be focus on either: a) Advanced theoretical topics in health and social behavior. This may include research and interventions issues, with an emphasis on theory application and development. b) Gender, race, and class in health promotion. This course would review current developments in those areas and explore their practical implications for health promotion.