

Excellence in Teaching

William Andersen

Speech

The number one skill students can acquire in college is to learn how to love how to learn. A degree doesn't come with a guarantee, but rather is a tool that will enable students to achieve success for the rest of their lives. College is about learning how to think, learning how to process information, and developing the ability to act on that information quickly. The amount of information available for our immediate use is growing exponentially. Students need to know how to keep up with changing knowledge.

What William says about teaching at Western:

I think I must have had all the best students. Attendance is my classes is close to 100%. The students here are just exceptional. They take responsibility, they are respectful, they have a great work ethic. They are eager to learn and bring a fresh enthusiasm that makes working here a joy. I am impressed with the way students encourage one another and bring out the best in each other. It is a wonderful thing to witness the way students here at Western help one another.

The other really wonderful thing about working at Western is the support that the faculty and staff have for one another. The faculty in the Speech Department are connected to students and interact with them in a variety of ways. Dr. Emily Plec, who has an interest in Environmental Communication, and her students, have been actively promoting recycling. The students put together a display in Werner University Center of the materials that could have been recycled but were not. This was a provocative bit of student research as well as an application of persuasion. Dr. Plec, Dr. Mayhead and Dr. Backus all involve their students in research and take them to the Northwest Communication Association conference. It is exciting to work in such a vibrant atmosphere where the faculty brag about their students' accomplishments.

Involvement with students

Following the example of his colleagues, William seeks ways to connect with students. He is involved with students on campus in a variety of ways. William serves on the Student Conduct Committee, the General Scholarship Committee, and will be serving on the Suicide Prevention Task Force.

William's Philosophy of Teaching

"Would you rather be a sage on stage, or a guide on the side?" This was a question posed to me by one of my mentors as I was entering the teaching profession. The question posed caused me to consider the many instructors I have had, and which style I preferred. While either extreme would not be the best approach, I would tend to lean toward being a "guide on the side." We all have different reasons for taking this course, and while I can not design the course to fit everyone's ideal perfectly, I will try to open the course up for you to explore your individual interests and curiosities.

While it is self-evident, it seems at times overlooked that the college and this course exist to help you, the student. Outside of teaching, I work as a consultant and am a partner in a diverse publishing company. My first professional love, however, is teaching. I consider myself to be very fortunate to be a teacher, and look forward to helping each of you however I can. That being said, it is important to understand that you can only get out of this course what you are willing to put into it—the more you put in, the more you can get out of the course. It is my hope that, regardless of why you signed up for this course, that you will put forth the effort to get out of the course all that you are able, and respect the other students in the class as they attempt to do the same.

Innovative Assignments

*I hear and I forget
I see and I remember
I experience and I understand*

I use a lot of group activities in courses to encourage students to engage the material, to reflect on what they are learning, and to discuss what they are learning with their peers. I am a big believer in experiential learning, and use various games and simulations in class to help illustrate concepts like culture shock. The game "Win as Much as You Can" is a very effective way of teaching students about conflict management styles and about collaboration.

The learning opportunities and assignments I select are explicitly linked to course learning outcomes. For example, two of the most important things students need to learn in public speaking classes are how to organize their thoughts and to develop confidence before the audience. The first assignment I give in Public Speaking is a graded impromptu speech, that is designed to achieve both of these goals. Students are given two words, and select one to be their topic. Then they develop a speech about that topic. The speech is evaluated on the basis of organization. This assignment heightens student's awareness of the importance of organization, as they realize that the outline and structure of the speech is fundamental to the process of creating a speech. With this heightened awareness comes an appreciation for the organization and outlining process, which supports the instruction and learning throughout the remainder of the course.

I strive to challenge students. I believe the instructor's role is to create a safe space for risk. Students should be encouraged to take risks in classes, where the costs of risk taking are relatively low. This helps students develop the good judgment that will help them succeed in the workforce, where the stakes are higher.

What faculty say about William:

He conjures up a multitude of highly amusing and memorable examples . . . He responds to questions well and is able to re-orient the discussion back to the topic at hand without suppressing student commentary . . . his wit and humor make for an entertaining as well as informative lecture, and his abundance of ready-at-hand examples provide students with many opportunities to check their understanding. Moreover, he is responsive to students' questions and nonverbal behaviors, and comes across as a very approachable instructor.

Dr. Emily Plec

About William

William has taught at Western Oregon University for the past three years, teaching courses including Public Speaking, Effective Listening, Group Discussion and Leadership, and Oral Interpretation. He also has taught at George Fox University, Portland Community College, and the University of Portland. William earned his Masters degree from Oregon State University, where he was also recipient of the Oregon Laureate Award (1997), an honor that also paid for his graduate education.

In addition to teaching at WOU, William also is the proprietor of a family owned publishing house, Com Star Media, LLC.

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