

Statement of Teaching Philosophy
Learning through Anthropological Lens
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I am fortunate to have had observed, experienced, and practiced different teaching styles in various learning institutions: as an undergraduate at the University of the Philippines-Diliman (UPD); as a graduate student at the University of Hawaii-Manoa (UHM); as an instructor at three universities in the Philippines (UPD, Ateneo de Manila University, and University of Asia and the Pacific) and at the University of Hawaii System (UHM and Kapiolani Community College). These experiences shaped my teaching philosophy where I emphasize the importance of learning through active class interactions.

My teaching experiences are varied, starting from the cream-of-the-crop courses at the University of the Philippines – where students belong to the top five percent of all high school graduates across the country – to culturally diverse classes at the University of Hawaii System. These experiences provided me with the perspective that instructors should motivate students to find, analyze, and apply what they have learned in the classroom setting to their daily lives, especially, anthropological concepts that promote acceptance and understanding. I reinforce the idea that there is more to learning than memorization of information before a quiz or examination. With that said, the challenge for instructors/teachers is organizing course materials equally relevant to the students and the academic discipline.

I have developed a teaching style based on two objectives, each of which is embedded in a wider anthropological goal of acceptance and understanding. First, I generate/reinforce student interest in the subject being taught. As an instructor of anthropology, I perceive my duty as an organizer of a dynamic learning environment that provides avenue for students to be exposed to the diversity of culture around us. It is also my task to introduce the discipline of anthropology as significant to the student's daily life.

A strategy I employed teaching anthropological archaeology involves engaging students to define and discuss ownership of the past at the start of every term. In addition, laboratory exercises (and other hands-on activities) provide excitement. These develop interest among students that motivates them to study beyond the subject matter. Another strategy I adopted teaching cultural anthropology at Kapiolani Community College in Honolulu, Hawaii are field exercises that involve analyzing their own/family life histories (e.g. food preference) to define "culture" and "ethnic identity." These exercises were an eye-opener for most students who previously thought that anthropology only studies the "exotic". In addition to writing exercises, I use assessments methods such as essay exams, reflection essays, and research projects that address students' ability to relate anthropological/archaeological concepts to wider issues.

Second, I make it a point to learn each of my students' names as early in the term as possible. Being able to know and call each student by their first name establishes an accommodating student-instructor relationship that makes students comfortable in engaging their teacher if they have dissenting opinions.

Related to my teaching philosophy, my research interests incorporate theoretical and methodological contributions with practical applications. My PhD research focused on understanding the development of the Ifugao agricultural terraces in the Philippines, and included discussions on the antiquity and origins of the rice terraces, landscape and indigenous agroforestry management, and defining Ifugao social organization. The Ifugao are part of the indigenous populations in the Philippine Cordillera, who are well known for their rice terraces and indigenous agricultural practices. The Ifugao terraced landscape has captured the world's imagination as an important cultural landscape (inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1995).

This research contributes to anthropological discussions on agriculture, water management, methodological approaches to dating agricultural terraces, and sustainable agricultural practices. Moreover, my investigations on Ifugao agricultural terraces combine heritage conservation and management. The Ifugao agricultural terraces are rapidly degrading; as such my study contributes to heritage conservation programs in Ifugao, in both tangible and intangible heritage.