



Throughout my life, it is awareness that has fascinated me; as both a learning and teaching tool and as the process through which any sort of understanding and integration occurs. Self-reflection and mindfulness form the basis of any learning process. For it is by studying how our bodies react somatically, emotionally, conceptually, and in relationship that we begin to understand how we are being affected by the process of learning.

Our brain works by creating connections between neurons, concepts, works, stories, and our personal and shared histories. My goal as a teacher is to develop students who have built their own personal scaffolding to hold the vast array of concepts, art movements, theories, artists, social and psychological concerns, and other elements involved in developing a personal creative practice. These connections occur both by connecting media, writings, and experiential activities internally as well as with a shared classroom dialogue about one's experiences and reflections. It is here where the wisdom found within the group creates a synchronous experience and joins the classroom together within a shared narrative.

I have already developed and implemented classes that integrate the multiple levels of (personal and shared) experience and awareness with academic material. The Brain, Body, and Being in Relationship group I co-facilitated began with a discussion on assigned reading materials, videos, and experiential exercises (e.g. spend 1 minute gazing into your friend's eyes and study how your body and mind react). Reading

materials and media were about neurobiological and interpersonal foundations of the mind, attachment theory, somatic awareness and integration. After we discussed our experiences with the assignments, a similar experiential exercises was woven into our time together along with time to debrief it and create connections to academic and personal/relational material. Students would provide feedback on class meetings via assessments passed out after class, and would also write journal entries where I provided feedback to them, prompting further inquiry or reflection for them. Unsurprisingly, many connections between academic, personal, shared, and visionary narratives emerged, both individually and as a group.

Throughout a lot of my teaching roles, I have also sought to find ways of assessing, understanding, and engaging people irrespective of their differing learning styles, perceived abilities or limitations, or developmental level. By combining differing medias, experiences, and other ways of engaging with information along with allowing for both shared and private ways of integrating concepts and practical skills, I study for and assess how each individual student best learns and communicates their understanding.

A flexible structure with clear guidelines, requirements, and expectations help foster an environment that feels safe as ambiguity and lack of direction can interfere with a student's learning process by raising anxiety or causing confusion. Flexibility is woven into the process as a way of responding to emergent information or needs of the group or individuals in the classroom. A goal for myself as an instructor is to help foster a trust in the inner compass that exists within oneself by studying how our conceptual frameworks are held together and the narratives that we use to understand them.

As a curator and art-developer with the Not Enough! Queer Music & Arts Festival, I supported the creative processes of over 40 individuals working collaboratively. By engaging creative individuals in conversations around their intention, desire, purpose and finding links between ideas and the individual's personal/shared goal(s), a clear pathway towards the completion of a project could often be found. This process has been similar, despite medium, or relational dynamic; from helping creating a band to helping two individuals create our first somatic experiencing group as "art practice."

Coming from such a diverse background and having engaged multiple mediums, systems, and groups as part of my art practice, I would love to encourage this type of interdisciplinarity, cross-pollination, and collaboration within any of the courses I teach. From Social Practice, to Sculpture, Art & Meditation, to Digital Video, Sound Arts, or any art theory, group or independent study courses I would teach. One of the focuses would be on how the "tension" that arises from these meetings and subsequent dissolutions and rebuilding helps support the creative processes. As, being an artist means being an interlocutor and as such, most of our work emerges from the liminal.

Project-based learning with critical engagement and dialogue around primary sources helps students develop the organizational and prioritizing skills necessary in becoming a practicing artist. Collaboration, adaptation, and cross-disciplinary research prepare students to move out into the working world where many value these skills and abilities in artists. In addition, by coaxing the development of self-awareness and self-reflection, I am imbuing elements within my students that will help guide and shape their future learning processes.

In my own research and practice as an artist, I am currently focused on learning how it is that the brain's prefrontal cortical structures help bring integration and understanding to the mind's multilayered pathways of information. This, in connection to the prefrontal cortex's ability to regulate emotionality and help develop meta-narratives that provide context for life's experiences, leads me to believe that a classroom that feels safe, secure, structured, and can bring together concepts, emotion, thoughts, language, and experience will help facilitate a person's ability to synthesize and integrate whatever life throws at them.

Therefore, as a classroom's "conductor," I understand the importance of staying within my own "window of tolerance" and ensuring that this prefrontal cortical presence stays within me and creates a "web" of integration and regulation around my students. A key component to this process being the practice of checking-in with myself and with the energy in the room; using my body as a tool or compass. In essence, my work with others is part of my creative practice as I witness the effects of my presence, curiosity, and compassion on others and the magic that unfolds as a result.