Lisa Park So Young

TEACHING STATEMENT

How do we effectively diversify conceptions such as art, technology, or aesthetics? How do we undo ontological blind spots and misconstruals and work towards a future better suited to each region's socio-cultural ecology? These are important concerns today as we witness increased racism and racialized politics, warranting conciliation and collective expansion of our thoughts via meaningful discourse rather than spectacular antagonization. Such initiatives need to begin from within our educational systems to tackle the issue from the very grounds of knowledge generation. Teaching is therefore an indispensable part of my reflexive practice.

Contextual awareness as such form the basis of my teaching philosophy, which is to be cultivated through interdisciplinary readings, critical analysis, and creative experimentation, while stressing the need to remain far-sighted by foregrounding the socio-cultural, and political implications of our creative works. Such cautious and discerning research is especially vital in Hong Kong today as we chart out a new hybrid society in line with the region's cultural context. There is a need to integrate judicious awareness of the site's cultural propensities into our art-tech curricula, so that we may devise interventions that are constructive for the context as opposed to creating potential repercussions by uncritically transposing theories and systems that are built upon a disparate value system from elsewhere and another a time.

Problem Based Learning (PBL) for instance, is a well suited pedagogy to this end, which I integrate into my lessons. It stresses student-centric learning wherein the emphasis shifts from the top-down transmission of knowledge to students' effective absorption through active engagement and critical synthesis of new solutions. Seeing education as a collective knowledge building process, students' own lived experiences and knowledge are valuable insights for problem solving. It enables students to consider ideas from multiple perspectives, makes the content more relatable, and generates original materials for research and art-making. The role of the teacher in PBL is to create a pertinent problem scenario, to provide the students with foundational knowledge and scaffoldings, to then focus on facilitating students' self-driven brainstorming, researching, and problem solving processes. As this framework is repeated with varying scenarios and contexts, students become better at critically analysing different situations at hand, in identifying the knowns and unknowns, and in devising effective solutions that are well thought through. This collective solution-seeking approach improves knowledge retention and collaboration skills, while building a sense of agency and confidence.

Students are also expected to present their findings in a number of critique sessions, which leads to refinement of skills in articulating, presenting, and questioning the ideas at hand. I often begin the course by recording initial presentations by students for them to analyze their own performances, then we would do another recording at the end of the course to self-reflect on the improvements made. The ability to present clearly is not only crucial to the success of any and all initiatives, its benefits have been well recognized during student internships as reflected in employer feedback.

Moreover, the recurring practice of starting from a complex scenario and arriving at clear solutions help students to start thinking more quickly, and clearly. According to my research, there is a heightened need to refine these skills especially in cultural contexts where learning is more often associated with 'listening' rather than 'debating' skills. I know these challenges as someone who went through this process of transitioning from one cultural system to another while attending and teaching at a variety of schools across South Korea, Malaysia, Canada, Singapore, and Hong Kong. I therefore put effort in transmitting precise know-hows, and best practices alongside real-life anecdotes, to effectively shape students' writing and discursive styles, while taking note of these experiences as potential reference points for my research.

Having taught English part-time since 2001, and teaching media arts courses at tertiary institutions since 2009, I worked with students from toddler age children to retirement-age executives from different cultural backgrounds. This broad and tacit awareness shapes me into a nimble educator with many pedagogic tools to engage a diverse body of students. I became pre-emptive of contingencies

such as the class size, technical limitations, or the ethnic make-up of students when building course materials and managing the class. This added complexity makes teaching more interesting and rewarding for me.

I begin my courses with ice-breaking activities to get to know my students, while paying careful attention to the cultural, and social dynamics in each class. Leading by example, I encourage open and considerate communication to establish mutual respect for the diversity therein. The empathic openness I nurture has been helpful in preventing and alleviating discrepancies in classrooms, such as ethnic tension, which may crop up amongst students. This considerate and empathic way of approaching and engaging with another is not to be dismissed as peripheral to content. It is the discursive tone I found most conducive for my academic writing and interpersonal communications, and therefore a quality I aim to instil as a basic predisposition for new academics.

Another important strategy is to imbue courses with a balance of theory and practice. I have always been inclined to tether my art-making and research to real-life processes and phenomena, and it also manifests in my teachings. For example, I incorporated national business proposal competitions into the *Creative Media Enterprise* module at Republic Polytechnic, pursued industry projects with my Final Year Project groups including branding exercises for local companies, or building interactive course material for Singapore Armed Forces. Students usually become more driven and engaged as these opportunities bring valuable experiences and accolades, increase their industry relevance, and can potentially lead to employment. I intend to continue this in view of the various art-tech events I will produce, so students can participate in organizing real-life projects. I also hope to co-author articles with students who exhibit keen insights and interest, paying forward the kindness extended by my own mentors. I have been teaching both theory and studio courses including physical computing, coding, animation, graphic and web design, drawing, and video production. Such technical versatility is helpful even for theoretical courses as I can incorporate data visualization software or simple mobile app development, as I have done for the Digital humanities course for the Department of English, at City University of Hong Kong.

My varied teaching experiences guide me in creating pertinent, demanding, and fulfilling courses that bridge gaps between theory and practice, industry and academia, as well as the local and the global. My diverse experiences reveal how different styles of teaching, disciplining, and curriculum building influence individual students, and by extension, how it contributes to a collective mentality of its communities as a whole. These insights become an integral part of my reflexive research and I look forward to working with students and collaborators in expanding our global academe and its field of creative arts by nurturing confident students who can bring original and judicious ideas into the global discourse.