

Emma S. Norman, PhD
Teaching Statement

I am a teacher. I am a student. For me, teaching is not a one-way street; rather it is an opportunity to listen, to engage, to learn, and to inspire.

Teaching, like learning, is an ongoing process. I always tell my students that my goal for them is not to walk away with a list of facts that they can rattle off at the end of the quarter (and all too often forget after the term). My goal is for students to become life-long learners, to engage with material in a way that ignites a passion so deep and a curiosity so strong that students undertake a transformation in the way they see the world.

Thus, I approach teaching as an opportunity to open up space for self-discovery, to allow students to look critically at the material presented to them and be able to place the material within a historical context. This model allows students to engage with the course content in a manner and context that is meaningful to them (and their communities). I see myself more as a guide in this process. My role is to help students find their way - keeping enough distance for them to explore but not letting them stray too far, and intervening in key moments to offer insights or to challenge thinking.

There is no formula for this work. However, the most important ingredient is certainly trust. Creating an environment where students trust me - and each other - is essential to undertake cognitive growth. The challenge in a classroom is to create an environment where students feel safe enough to let down their defenses and open themselves up to engage fully in the learning process. When students commit to this engagement, amazing growth occurs. Transformations transpire where students build confidence and, in turn, hone important skills to grow academically, as well as personally.

To meet these goals, I present a suite of pedagogical tools to cater to diverse learning styles. In general, my teaching style lends itself to rich discussions. I often engage students in activities such as pair-and-share, peer-review of writing, oral presentations, and weekly reflection papers to gauge student progress and connect students with different learning styles. I also provide students with the opportunity to work and problem-solve in group settings, an essential skill in today's multidisciplinary work setting. In addition, I frequently use multimedia to enhance the course content and connect with the current generation of technologically-savvy students. By presenting a suite of pedagogical tools, I aim to reach the diverse range of learners and provide opportunities for connection to the course material.

In addition, my teaching philosophy is grounded in a place-based pedagogical approach, which pulls the course content through a localized lens. As part of my teaching practice, I use service-learning activities to reinforce course material and link content to wider societal issues. For example, in the *Biology and Natural History of Salish Sea*, an introductory environmental studies course that I developed and that has been adopted as a required core course for all incoming students at Northwest Indian College, students participate in a habitat restoration project. This activity has several positive outcomes: it builds community within the classroom, it applies course content to a real-world example, and it connects the students with community members beyond the academy.

My teaching approach is also deeply rooted in a style respectful of multi-cultural education and learning styles. For example, while working with Coast Salish communities in the Pacific Northwest, I found that learning is often facilitated through experience. Whether it involves pulling a canoe, tying a net, or navigating the sea, learning occurs through doing. I afford my students this opportunity as well, through experiential activities such as nature walks and participation in community events. My teaching style also allows the classroom to grow together as a community (through cohort modeling), in addition to experiencing individual growth. This approach has a proven success record. I have earned two prestigious teaching awards: the American Indian College Fund Tribal College Faculty Member of the Year and the Student Choice Award. My teaching evaluations and annual teaching reviews consistently affirm these methods as successful. I apply these skills to connect with student populations that represent a diverse range of cultures and backgrounds.

In addition, I use my academic background to help frame the process of learning, providing structure for student growth and exposure to interesting and relevant material. I use my passion for issues related to environmental politics and water governance to bring life into classroom discussions and draw connections between course materials and current events. This is evident in my curriculum development. For example, the two case studies that I developed for the Native American Legacies Program at Evergreen State College have been adopted as leading examples of curricula focusing on resource governance in multi-cultural settings. This innovation is part of my ongoing commitment to excellence in the classroom (and beyond). I recently designed and piloted two courses related to the governance of shared resources that include culturally relevant material that are theoretically grounded in political ecology and environmental governance literature. This type of innovation represents my dedication to, and capacity for, transcending traditional classroom settings and promoting greater cultural and environmental awareness.

My teaching also reflects my ongoing research projects, which analyze the emergence of new governance mechanisms, the politics of scale, and the role of civil society in natural resource management. One of the key findings from my research is that actors at a subnational level are increasingly involved in international environmental governance activities, but that this participation does not necessarily translate to capacity. As an instructor (and researcher), I hope to remedy this disconnect between participation and capacity, and inspire the next generation of learners and leaders.

Through teaching and advising, I am committed to helping students reach their potential and foster critical thinking skills that allow them to navigate successfully through our complex and interconnected world.