

COLLEEN KELLY POPLIN

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students confront untold, and often unseen, obstacles in their access to higher education. I empower students to overcome those obstacles through ensuring that *all* my students see themselves in my course content. Regardless of primary course subject, the majority of my readings and media examples are produced by underrepresented scholars and filmmakers: women, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. I am also invested in staying current, finding modern examples of classic production principles. I create a classroom environment that is supportive and relevant.

Beyond my course materials, I teach production in a way that allows for economic and experiential diversity. While I am fully confident with technical teaching, I am always cognizant that students have varying access to technical tools once they leave school. As such, I prioritize transferrable storytelling. I curate media examples that my students could reasonably produce themselves—documentary work made in creative ways without major financing. My students leave my classroom prepared to tell powerful stories, no matter what tools they use to tell them. I regularly shift the way I present course material to accommodate the multiplicity of learning styles and educational backgrounds present in my classroom.

I am particularly interested in increasing the visibility of inclusive media work, and taking an active role in the mentorship of female-identifying and non-binary production students. The gender inequity prevalent in traditional STEM fields is echoed in media production technology, and it limits the scope of projects directed by women. To address this disparity, I designed an undergraduate course in intersectional feminist media production. This course gives students the opportunity for advanced single-camera production around a shared content focus: the female experience, both lived and observed. It directly addresses the nationwide gender gap in advanced technical courses and has proven to be an important portfolio-building opportunity for aspiring intersectional feminist filmmakers. The course has become a “safe space” for production students to build their technical confidence in an otherwise male-dominated field. My unique pedagogical approach led to my teaching materials being published by UFVA’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Teaching Media (EDIT Media) initiative as a faculty resource.

I openly and deliberately share my enthusiasm for what I teach, balancing thoroughly-researched and stimulating course material with informal, humorous, and student-centered lecture and discussion. In sum, all of my pedagogical strategies are dedicated to empowering students for the long haul.