

Dr Traill Dowie

Pedagogy Statement

Greetings, let me begin by saying what a blessing it is to be given the opportunity to share a classroom with you. I am excited by where our journey together will take us.

In my classroom you can expect me to focus on the transformation of self above all else. I am passionate about the potential of ideas and practice to help you discern what it is that you wish to organise your mind around.

My educational stance may be summarised by the two Ps of classical Greek culture. These are Paideia and Parrhesia. The concept of Paideia refers to the optimization of the individual, whereby they are able to full fill their unique and personal potentials. Within classical Greek philosophy this involves the harmonization of different aspects of the self for the purpose of forming a citizen, in the original sense of the idea. The notion of Paideia may be summarized as the maturation of one's soul through death: a death of one's preconceived, ill-thought-through proclivities. Death is, of course, not literal (although throughout history it often has been) but rather it is figurative. This concept of death refers to the way that education in its fullest sense challenges the very foundations of an individual's self-conception (West, 1999). This process of being tested then allows for a refining of one's sense of self and autonomy. For example, if an individual believes that all black people are somehow inferior to white people, this pre-rational value will be challenged in an education setting where Paideia is at play. Paideia encourages interrogation of pre-rational thought – including the basis for the individual's supposition – and helps them to defend their view with something other than a claim to faith or freedom of choice.

The resulting process of such critical and dialogical engagement is the act of Paideia, which sees a transformation and alteration to this original perspective, based on information, argument and insight.

The second term, Parrhesia, runs hand-in-hand with the concept of Paideia. Parrhesia can simply be defined as the practice of fearless and frank speech. There is no Paideia without Parrhesia. Parrhesia is not just the right to free speech as we would term it in popular culture, rather it also entails the obligation to speak frankly. Parrhesia is an idea that is attacked in totalitarian societies and has experienced some attack in recent times by a regressive element that has emerged in the modern academy. It is important to realize that Parrhesia is not synonymous with insult, rhetoric or manipulation but rather it is an attitude of courageous truth-telling. Such truth telling is only possible within an environment which fosters the pursuit of what throughout the history of the Academy has been called Veritas – or truth.

In my class I expect you to show up as fully as possible on any given day. I take your education seriously, and so I expect you to do the same. I expect you to read, think and speak, I expect you to be on time.

There is absolutely no social media or text messaging in my class unless there is serious reason for such a distraction. I expect you to be honest, which means not agreeing with me but rather collaborating with me to help you get what you need for your deep education. I cannot wait for us to see who we shall become.