How does she do it?

advocacy
nontraditional teaching style
authenticity & inclusivity
personalized service learning
diverse resources
timely, thoughtful feedback
reflective assessment

the pedagogy of HEATHER DAVIDSON

teacher. advocate. community organizer.
I don't belong here, statistically speaking, **BUT THERE'S NEVER BEEN A PLACE I BELONGED MORE.** COLLEGE CHANGED MY LIFE, AND MY TEACHING CHANGES THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

I grew from these grounds and found my potential, my inspiration, my path and my voice. It happened while I was a WWU student. **MY HISTORY SHAPES THE CLIMATE I TRY TO FOSTER.** POSITIVE. FORWARD. TRUTHFUL. SAFE. OBSERVANT.

"Professor Davidson has an innate ability to interact and engage with her students in a remarkable and impacting way. She daily strives to challenge her students to ponder the hard issues in life and has created an incredible dynamic within the classroom that is honestly, hard for me to even explain. The honesty, safety, and vulnerability that occurs each class is unlike anything I have experienced. Professor Davidson has a keen ability to bring up very difficult subjects and engage the class and get them to interact with what she is teaching. We have covered subjects from sexual harassment, to racism, to sexism and never once has it been uncomfortable. I am a very private person, and in this class I have opened up to my classmates as if they were family." COMM318 Student

"Professor Davidson is the best teacher I have ever had, hands down. If you have the option to take a class with her, DO IT! She has an incredible way of connecting with you as an individual, and bonding the class as a whole. Her teaching style is inspiring and motivating! She is engaging and interactive. Each class is something new! Convinced yet?"

Professor Davidson offers a comprehensive professional communication course, with a twist. While her course undoubtedly includes many of the same elements as other professors, I feel that Professor Davidson offers a completely unique perspective about professional communication. 318 Student

**COURSE LIST** *AY 2014-15*
Comm244: Advocacy through Media
Comm308: Fundraising
Comm318: Professional Communication (4 sections)
Comm416: Event Planning

What the educator does in teaching is make it possible for the students To become themselves. -PAULO FREIRE
THE TABLE IN MY CLASSROOM IS LARGE.

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME**

(EXACTLY AS THEY ARE)

"My class is a potluck. Bring what you have to share. It is plenty."

"WHEN COMPARING MYSELF TO SOME OF MY FRIENDS AND PEERS, I HAVE ALWAYS FELT THAT THEIR JOB EXPERIENCES HAVE BEEN FAR MORE "REAL" THAN MINE, AND THAT THEY ARE ALREADY A STEP AHEAD OF ME IN THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD. THIS CLASS HAS SHOWN ME THE REMARKABLE SKILLS I DO HAVE BECAUSE OF MY PAST EXPERIENCES WORKING WITH YOUTH AND AT MY SUMMER CAMP, AND HOW PROUD I SHOULD BE OF MYSELF FOR MY DEDICATION AND WORK ETHIC."

318 STUDENT

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318 STUDENT

"Ms. Davidson is so inspirational! She puts her heart and soul into the course lessons and it shows."

318 STUDENT

"I felt that I was understood and cared for as a student, and this greatly contributed to my motivation to succeed."

244 STUDENT

"Heather has become one of my favorite teachers at Western. Although she is new, she is intelligent. She is a very passionate human being and really does care about how you do in and out of class."

244 STUDENT

"Ms. Davidson is so inspirational! She puts her heart and soul into the course lessons and it shows."

318 STUDENT

"I felt that I was understood and cared for as a student, and this greatly contributed to my motivation to succeed."

244 STUDENT
I survey students on day 1 to assess their skill sets and what they are most interested in developing, and to determine what pathways, causes, experiences and resources will be most engaging for each group, I then partner them with complimentary peers and prearranged community partners for the quarter.

“I think that part of the reason the SL project was so successful was because of the level of instructor involvement. Most group projects the professor just assigns groups and then leaves you alone. This leaves room for people to never speak with their group and be scrambling at the end of the quarter to do something, anything for a grade. Since we had so many "checkpoints" with you, there wasn’t really room for us to lose control of the project. We were constantly in contact to the point where we spoke pretty much everyday. Everyone was aware of what was happening, what needed to be done still, and who was doing what. That level of instructor involvement helped our group to stay together and be a stronger team.”

244 Student

“Any team that gets out in the open air to break up the normal routine will come back to whatever task they are working on with increased focus, connectedness, and productivity. I will not soon forget my time spent at Lakewood with this class I am now very closely connected to, and I know the skills honed on the ropes course will be evident in every team I am a part of.”

318 Student

Professional Communication students completed a high ropes course to foster cohesiveness. It was such a useful exercise that I sought and was granted permission to add a nominal course fee to provide the opportunity each quarter.
Overt, realistic, and tactful communication with community partners and student-teams is vital to the achievement of learning outcomes. I consistently communicate with each partner, each team, & each student.

"I can't remember the last time I was that productive. I had another group project for a different class this quarter and the comparison made me want to rip my hair out." 244 Student

"I hope that you received my update a few weeks ago about the stellar job that your service learning team is doing. We are 4 days away from the Peace Builder Awards Gala and the student team is continuing step up in crunch time. They have each volunteered to go beyond their 15 required hours to be key volunteers at our Gala this Friday. Not only have they each done a wonderful job of taking a project from start to finish, they have also been quite willing to jump into any task that comes up, as tends to happen with event planning. I look forward to working with them next week, wrapping things up, and reflecting on the event and planning process. I also am excited to participate in any wrap up evaluations that you have for us and complete your survey.

Regarding your future classes, we would LOVE to partner with you and your students this winter quarter..."

Iris Maute-Gibson
development & outreach coordinator
Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center

"I just want to start off by saying that is probably the best group project I've ever been a part of. [My teammates] have been amazing people to work with, and we're probably going to end up being friends after this, which is more than I can say about any other group project I've done." 244 Student

"Our group had so much cohesion and worked efficiently as a unit. I have never been a part of such a positive group dynamic and am looking forward to the next opportunity I have to be involved with a service learning team."

"Despite the hiccups we had along the way, our team was able to take a great deal away from this service-learning project. We stayed focused, we did not give up, and we supported each other every step of the way. Looking back on activities like the high ropes course we completed at Lakewood, it makes me realize how fun activities like those help us during serious times, like tackling professional responsibilities that involve teamwork."

318 Student
Part of valuing the whole student is recognizing the weight of my words as their guide. The impact can be so valuable, so I strive to provide it quickly.

"I learned much from the process of feedback throughout the quarter. It was fast, accurate and well thought out. I have never received such extensive feedback from an instructor and I greatly appreciated it. Genuine feedback is a rarity in the academic setting at times, and the personal interest that you took in us as students was so empowering." 244 Student

December 17, 2014 at 2:05pm, I replied:
Sorry man, no dice. I regrettably, yet still somehow happily, inform you that one has to have a 95% or above for an A in my courses. I will say this: you missed the mark by two-tenths of a point. Two bloody tenths. You should be proud of the work you did and know that the "-" indicates only the slightest deviation from perfection as a professional-in-training. From an instructor who totally believes in average grades reflecting effort that is average, the A- is a high compliment my friend! I understand the slight sting of disappointment, but hope that my affirmation of you as both student of mine and student of life helps to buffer it a little. Here’s to nailing that A to the wall in Winter!

-Hello Heather,
Thanks for the explanation, I appreciate it. See you in class!

318 Final Reflection Paper Submitted: Dec 3 at 4:58pm; Instructor Assignment Comments Submitted: Dec 3 at 9:24pm
As you noted, I am not blind to the challenges your team has faced this quarter. I have been consistently impressed by your team’s grace and poise, and the professionalism with which you responded to [your SL partner’s] critique was right on point. As I, too, learned this quarter, mistakes happen and yes, you are right when you say that acknowledging them and trying again is a solid professional (and, I’d add, personal) approach. I appreciate your work, your thoughts on the tasks throughout the quarter, and the obvious cohesion you strive for with your teammates. Also, the last round of materials you sent to [your SL partner] looked incredible. I hope you saw my positive feedback on the corrections in the email correspondence, too, as I was watching it all unfold. You are on to great things, and I’m so honored to have been a part of your professional development path!

My students never wait more than one week for this type of customized feedback.
My history is wrapped in a wide blanket of people, places, resources, and interests. This creates a vast repertoire from which to draw from for student-centered teaching and allows lessons to go beyond the textbook and into the lives of my students. The relevance they find in the resource variety creates a space wherein everyone can see themselves, their future, and their precious and unique skills and potential. Here are some samples of guests, activities, readings and resources my students explore and engage with over the quarter.

"Thank you so much for having me!! It was really an enjoyable experience! I would love to come back! The opportunity reminded me how much I love education and the importance of communication...and actually made me want to pursue a masters after I am ready to retire for my current life adventures, so I could teach. Thank you for inspiring those young minds in fresh and exciting new ways, you are making the world a better place!"

Lacey "Carmen Gesome" Ramone

"She shows you videos that make you cry. It's great." 244 Student
"My favorite part of this course was not only all of the causes that you enlightened us to but that fact that you yourself took part in so many. You could relate to them which shows that you know what you are talking about and that students should listen to you!" 244 Student

"Heather Davidson... is a fantastic instructor that puts a lot of work into planning our lessons. Heather has a special talent to make every student feel an important member of our society and university. Heather is incredibly inspiring with all the work she does in our community and encourages her students to do the same through service-learning projects. She often takes a creative approach to teaching her lessons and inviting guest speakers to come in for additional insight." 318 Student

Students identify issues of importance to them. I integrate the issues into curriculum in all of my courses. I model advocacy in our community, engage students in advocating for themselves and the things they care about, and watch the waves ripple outward.

Whether in discussions, class activities, written assignments or capstone projects, each assignment includes a reflective component.

"I learned how to find the skills that I have, and how to identify what I am good at. This in turn makes me confident. Confidence will allow me to utilize my skills to the best of my abilities in my personal, academic and professional life. Confidence also allows a person to be more secure in admitting they need help, or were wrong, or messed up in some way. Being able to do this helps everyone to improve and more forward, creating the best work possible." 318 Student

"I learned so much from my both my service-learning team and my service-learning partner; the importance of advocating for yourself as well as your team, not giving up even when faced with challenges, the importance of shared team experience, and how to really build a collaborative climate with a team even when things aren’t going as you planned (which can also bring you closer together). I am walking away from this course more confident in my competency both as a student, and as a future professional." 318 Student

"Heather is absolutely phenomenal. I am coming away from this class with such real-life experience that is directly applicable to future courses as well as in life. She is real, genuine, smart as hell, and really makes you leave class thinking about the things we talked about in class. Any class with Heather is bound to be a positive experience." 318 Student