

Sharing your teaching philosophy and/or a brief bio will allow students to understand your beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives and how these may influence their experience in your course. You can find some good tips and questions to consider [here](#).

[Anna Arlotta-Guerrero, University of Pittsburgh](#)

I would like to take a moment to share a little about me and what brought me to teaching at the University of Pittsburgh. I am proud to be a Pitt Alumni having earned both my B.S. in English Writing and Communications, as well as my Ph.D. at the university. I earned my M.Ed. in Reading and Bilingual Education at Texas Woman's University.

My first career was in marketing and sales, working for two professional soccer teams in Pittsburgh and in Dallas. I am a career changer and went back to school for a teaching certification and M.Ed., then spent 15 years working for Carrollton Farmers Branch ISD in Dallas. I taught Grades PK-4. My mentor teacher told me that her best advice was to not teach only one grade in your teaching career. I took that advice and learning about different ages and grade levels had a big impact on my teaching career. In 2005, my family moved back to Pittsburgh, and I worked on my Ph.D. at Pitt and was hired to coordinate the CASE teacher prep program and teach in the Department of Health and Human Development in 2010.

My husband is from Mexico City and splits his retirement time between Pittsburgh and our home in Mexico. We have two sons, Michael who lives in Pittsburgh and works for technology start-ups and Andrew, who is a 7th grade math teacher in Denver.

[Sarah Eckert, Eastern University](#)

Sarah Anne Eckert has been an assistant professor at Eastern University since 2020. She earned her doctorate in Educational Theory and Policy from Penn State in 2011. Dr. Eckert is committed to preparing all educators to engage in Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education practices. She approaches all of her teaching with a growth mindset, believing that she can typically learn as much or more from the students in her class as they can from her. Her goal is to support all students in their learning and welcomes feedback from students on all aspects of the course.

[Leigh Forbes, Gannon University](#)

I love teaching and want to support you in your quest to make a difference in the world. I believe that the better we know each other, the better we'll work together! I believe we each come with diverse funds of knowledge and we have a lot to learn from each other. I hope you'll share your knowledge and experiences throughout the semester.

I encourage original critical and creative thinking. I plan to provide active and engaging experiences and hope you'll expand not only your brain, but also your heart. In addition, I'm a storyteller. I recognize that my experiences as a white, cisgender, aging, middle class woman may be different than yours and welcome you to tell your stories as well. Our engagement with the arts is one way to tell our tales. I hope you'll look for the connections between my stories, your experiences, and each lesson.

Finally, I love the outdoors and I'm frequently found in areas where there is no cell signal or internet access. Please be patient as there will be times when I don't respond immediately.

Teresa Powell, Lincoln University

Dr. Teresa Powell is a career educator, serving the field of education in numerous roles, for over 27 years. Currently, Dr. Powell serves as Chair and Assistant Professor in the Education Department at Lincoln University and has done so for the past five years. As Chair, Dr. Powell oversees all facets of the Education programs, and teaches in Early Childhood, Special Educational Leadership. Dr. Powell is passionate about providing an outstanding education to students, particularly those who've been hit hard by life.

Prior to arriving at Lincoln, Dr. Powell served for 22 years as an educator of students in grades K-12, in Pennsylvania and New Jersey public schools. She spent 11 years as a teacher of elementary school and middle school mathematics; and spent 15 years in progressively responsible administrative roles. Dr. Powell's most recent administrative role was Assistant Superintendent of an urban school system in southeastern, PA.

Prior to becoming Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Powell served as Director of Middle School Regular & Special Education in the same district. An expectation of that role was responsibility for oversight of special education programs at the district's Middle Schools. And before that appointment, Dr. Powell served in the identical capacity at the elementary level; as the Director of Elementary Regular & Special Education.

Dr. Powell fights for kids, and she fights for people who fight for kids. Her desire to ensure that all children receive an outstanding education drives her passion for its pursuit.

Michelle Sobolak, University of Pittsburgh

I love teaching this course. Prior to working at IUP and Pitt in teacher education, I was a teacher for 10 years. I worked as a reading specialist (K-5), Literacy Coach (K-3) and as a first-grade teacher. In my role at Pitt, I identify first as a teacher. What that means to me is that I am committed to lifelong learning about literacy teaching and how to work in culturally relevant and sustaining ways. While I instruct this course, I know that I have a lot to learn from each of you, what you bring to this course and your placement experiences. I am committed to continuously improving my teaching to ensure you are prepared as strong culturally relevant early literacy educators. This is hard work, as it was when I taught, but I am committed to supporting you as you develop into literacy educators, to learn from and with you and to always forefront the important work of teaching the whole child.

Ron Whitaker, Cabrini University

This course intentionally argues for the importance of understanding, valuing, and operationalizing Exemplar Cultural teaching strategies, as a means to:

1. Promote Academic Excellence
2. Become Culturally Competent
3. Stimulate Socio-Political Consciousness
4. Tap into Student Culture

Miriam Witmer, Millersville University

#1: You are more important to me as a person than just as a student in my class.

What does this mean? It means that I truly respect and appreciate you as a person who can contribute your story and life experiences to our class. My hope is that you will feel supported enough so that you will take some good educational risks this semester. "There is no comfort in the growth zone and no growth in the comfort zone."

#2: I am a social constructivist/social reconstructionist.

What does this mean? I will encourage you to collaborate and sometimes ask you to step out of your comfort zone for the sake of learning experientially. "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." ~ William Butler Yeats

#3: I love teaching!

What does this mean? I am enthusiastic and committed to supporting each of you so you can become the best teacher you can be. I will challenge you to be excellent!

#4: I am an advocate for the power diversity brings to all learning situations.

What does this mean? I will attempt to explore diversity and inclusion in the full sense of the terms and challenge you to do the same.

More about your professor... I identify as a multiracial female, and I acknowledge that I am white passing so I benefit from white privilege. My pronouns are she/her/hers. I have a 24-year-old daughter, Marissa, and I have been married to my partner, John, for the last 37 years. I enjoy traveling, playing competitive tennis and riding my Harley 1200 Sportster. Prior to coming to Millersville in 1999, I taught English for 16 years at Lampeter- Strasburg High School. Yes, I am old 😊, but I am most alive when I am teaching!