

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

By Miriam Albert-Sobrino

I have always seen teaching as an experience very similar to the process of writing a script: Seating in front of what at first looks like a dreaded blank page that turns overtime into a challenging canvas, in which teacher and student write a piece together. The first attempts to get to know each other; the step backs; the butterflies of the first day; and the excitement when making progress; those are to me recurrent feelings that I often experience during both processes.

When analyzed closely, it is easy to see how teachers and screenwriters share a similar workflow. Both processes begin with research, an investigation that it is not only of the content of the lecture (story for the screenwriter) but also of the target. A writer tries to find out more about who the audience of her story is going to be. The teacher in the same way researches what her students' backgrounds are, what level of knowledge they have, and what can be more useful to them. She might ask herself: What are their expectations? What are they interested in? What kind of learners are they? As soon as she learns that, as soon as she understands that she is not teaching a mass, but a group of individuals, she can help the students teach themselves, make their own decisions, and take an active role in the process.

Research does not end there, the writer, as the teacher, puts a lot of time and effort in developing the story she is going to tell: the themes, the plot points, the historical events, the context in which the story occurs. Teacher like writer studies the content of the lecture, but she is not limited to it. She might not explain the details that surround certain events, but she does have to study them, review them and set them up in order for the students to understand the content, but especially to help them think critically and question the topics presented.

Professional screenwriters know that writing a script is usually more successful when the characters are the ones writing the story. And as awkward as it sounds that is actually a true statement. Often times the best script is the one in which the writer sows the seeds of what the characters are like, and then lets them freely develop the story and their personalities with a distinct and peculiar voice. The role of the writer is basically just to guide them. Something similar happens in the classroom, the teacher is there for the students and serves as a guide, but she creates an environment in which the students can critically appreciate what they are being taught, and contribute to their own learning process by suggesting content, discussing with their classmates the topic covered and helping develop the syllabus.

As an instructor, I work hard trying to give my students the appropriate environment to allow them to grow freely as individuals. I want them to take over and be able to lead their own teaching, but overall to have a unique voice that is recognizable among any other student. I want them to be the protagonists of their own script, question what it is presented in front of them, and become individuals who are not afraid of writing their own story. And I hope to do all that by being a positive, accessible and knowledgeable asset inside and outside of the classroom.