

Aresha Martinez-Cardoso
Teaching Statement

My goal as an educator is to help students develop the empirical tools, analytic skills, and interdisciplinary perspectives that will allow them to address complex health and social challenges both within and outside of the classroom. In addition, I view my teaching as a vehicle for transforming students and society. I probe students to consider how race, class, gender, and other axis of stratification are socially constructed yet shape society, lives, and health. In this way, I view teaching and mentoring as an extension of my role as a researcher and storyteller, by training a future generation who will be equipped to address health and social inequities with a critical gaze. Teaching and mentoring have been a rewarding part of my professional career and I have aspired to approach this role with intention, I look forward to continue engaging in these efforts throughout my career.

Approach to Teaching: Being a strong educator has been at the forefront of my professional agenda, and I have sought opportunities to develop my teaching practice and philosophy throughout my career. At the University of Michigan, I participated in the Preparing Future Faculty seminar to gain skills in designing syllabi, inclusive teaching, strategies, and assessment. As a result, I approach my courses, guest lectures, and even lab sessions with the end goal in mind—*what do I want students to leave with after this and how do I help get them there?* I plan for teaching by (1) reflecting on student learning objectives, (2) designing course content and activities to achieve those objectives, and (3) outlining these objectives for students so that there are clear expectations and learning goals.

So that my classroom can serve as a space where students can be transformed, I approach teaching with passion and creativity to activate student learning and engagement. This philosophy is informed by both research on effective learning and teaching, and critical pedagogy in higher education. In brief, both show that students learn best when instructors: activate prior knowledge; connect material to students' interests; meaningfully create connections between content; and provide students with opportunities to apply course content with feedback. Therefore my classroom space is geared at prioritizing student discussions, experiential learning, and grappling with challenges together, rather than relying on me as "expert". In-classroom activities are also designed to address a variety of learning styles such as case-studies, small-group discussion, and applied activities. In order to help students guide their own learning, I design course assignments so that students can decide how to apply course content to their specific interests. For example in the core course I teach, students write an op-ed for their midterm, peer-facilitate a portion of class, and select to design either a research project or public health intervention for their final. I believe students value and benefit from my teaching style as they perform well in the course and both my qualitative and quantitative teaching evaluations are consistently positive.

Interacting with Students: In interacting and engaging with students inside and outside of the classroom, I aim to challenge students to strive for self-development and high-caliber work, while also being available and responsive to individual needs. For example, with my research assistants, I developed an individual development plan where students reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, long and short-term goals, and we explicitly discuss how our research activities will help enhance their skills and outline

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mutual expectations. In my teaching, I require students to sign-up for an office hours appointment so I can meet them individually and demystify professor-student interactions. In my classroom, I am explicit about adopting a “no students left behind policy” and encourage students to seek me out as issues arise, and I provide multiple opportunities for students to offer feedback on the course. In addition, I recognize that students have unique learning styles and experiences that shape their learning, and I embrace inclusive teaching so that all students feel valued and have the tools to succeed. Within the classroom, I practice a “Brave Spaces” approach where students are pushed to engage in productive and useful dialogue on challenging topics, yet still take responsibility for their words, recognize their privilege, and lean into discomfort in the classroom.

Teaching & Mentoring Experience: Throughout my career, I have had many opportunities to put my pedagogical approach to teaching and mentoring into practice. During my master’s degree at UCLA, I served as a GSI in Health in the Chicano/Latino Community and led the Community Development and Social Justice program, a professional development program for undergraduate students interested in applied social fields (public health, policy, urban planning, and social work). At the University of Michigan, I was part of the teaching team for the core Health Behavior and Health Education program planning course for master’s students. At the University of Chicago, I designed and taught a new course, Social Inequalities in Health, for graduate and undergraduate students. While these courses have covered wide-ranging topics my approach to teaching, which emphasizes critical classroom dialogues, applied active learning, and student-directed learning, remains the same.

Through my Embodying Racism research lab, I have also had the opportunity to mentor and advise students outside of the classroom. Students who have worked with me range from undergraduate to doctoral students from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. In our lab, students are onboarded with a detailed [lab handbook](#) where I walk through the lab values, mentoring expectations, and how our team works so that the “hidden curriculum” of mentorship and research is made explicit. While student contribute to our lab projects, I make a concerted effort to tailor our work to their goals and professional aspirations.

Outside of formal teaching, I participate in public speaking engagements, workshops, and guest lectures to a variety of academic and professional audiences. Aligned with my aforementioned teaching principles, my speaking engagements are designed to target specific learning and developmental objectives audience and are tailored to the needs and experience of the audience.