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Teaching Statement

My approach to teaching is simple. I share my passion for the material and I treat each student with respect. I come by my passion naturally. It is my nature to be enthusiastic. Still, we all know how draining teaching can be, and, in fact, how exhausting life itself is. I have developed an ability, even when I am stressed or preoccupied, to tap into my inner reservoir of passion. Need often necessitates evolution. For over a decade, while I was teaching as an adjunct at Adelphi, I was also working as a teaching artist in schools all over the East Coast. For weeks at a time, I would conduct media literacy workshops. Often I would be in a different grade level and even a new school every day. I had neither the leverage of giving grades, nor that of speaking with parents. My classes succeeded or failed on how well I could charm young people into interest in my material. Kids are very honest. They rarely fake it. When confronted with a difficult class (and I was in all types of classes, from the prestigious Greenwich Country Day School to Project YOU in East New York with teens who were facing felony charges), I found ways to pump up my energy and my passion, to literally blaze with interest for my discipline in front of my students. Interest breeds interest. I discovered the more I gave out, the more I would get back.

In terms of having respect for each student, this is an orientation about which I feel very strongly. As a teacher, it is so easy to be captivated by brilliance. I confess that I love working with bright and engaged students. It is why I am so delighted to teach a course each spring in the Honors College, but then any real teacher could get excited about working with students like those. Yet it is the other students whom I make sure I serve equally, the ones who are “ordinary” (as if any student is) or the ones who are challenged, intellectually or socially or both. These latter students, in particular, are my

specialty. I spot them the first day of class, the ones who look confused or scared, the ones who won't make eye contact with me. I make them my special challenge, learning their names before anyone else's, working to get them to relax and to trust themselves and their opinions. I strive to make them happy to be in class. I take great satisfaction when they progress, which they almost always do. Sparking their interest in my material always expands their development in the skills of the Communications' field.

My recent endeavors in scholarship along with my artistic activity have been centered on language, the new media "language" of our time. My artistic endeavors explore the options that new technologies provide in an attempt to free cinema from the confining yoke of enormous budgets, which cause most filmmakers to aspire toward entertainment rather than art. In my scholarship I am equally committed to devising strategies to empower young people to both critically "read" the language of media and be able to effectively "write" in this language. My teaching is an ongoing quest to stimulate my students to do what I am trying to do myself. I want them to be critical thinkers, to see the opportunities and the dangers in the world with fresh eyes. I want to empower them with the ability both to understand the various layers of meaning in media and to express themselves effectively in the various options of media, the native tongue of their era.