

**Kera N. Lovell**  
**Teaching Philosophy Statement**

Throughout my courses, I remain committed to engaging students in discussion-driven critical analysis. I actively strive to create a classroom in which students can ask questions freely, engage with topics of power and diversity constructively, and build a foundation in core historical narratives, key concepts, and critical theory. My courses are often structured with the process of cyclical iteration as the foundation for improving skills and building knowledge, moving from identifying and comparing scholarly arguments at the beginning of the semester to ultimately having students share their own evidence-based arguments as forms of new knowledge production. Four pedagogical principles ground my courses: 1) Putting multiple viewpoints in conversation, 2) Engaging students through play, 3) Centering student production of knowledge, and 4) Moving learning beyond the classroom.

In my research and teaching, I have found that the traditional “add diversity and stir” technique of storytelling does not foster a lasting connection to produce transformational learning. Using creative group exercises and student-centered discussions, I transform my classroom into a space where students across diverse backgrounds can not only detect layers of injustice and power, but can sit with them to drive their critical thinking. In my U.S. history courses, I have students analyze subjects from multiple viewpoints to train them to pinpoint differences and similarities in arguments over time and across different contexts. When teaching about WWII-era Honolulu in my American Studies course at the University of Hawai‘i, students not only read historiography on internment, but compare memoirs written by a Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard worker and a war-time prostitute as part of our larger discussion of how racism, sexism, and militarization fueled different types of physical, economic, social, and geographic regulation during World War II. Comparing different arguments and those representations in primary sources becomes a way for students to see multiple perspectives across a shared experience, revealing important differences in citizenship. As a final reflective task across my courses, students create a “mind map” that requires them to reflect on the course by putting divergent subjects in visual conversation with one another. As you can see in [examples](#) my students created at the culmination of one course I taught at Purdue University, projects like these encourage originality and creativity in having students identify connections and patterns that connect law, culture, and science.

Across my courses, I use a variety of methods of assessment to engage students across various disciplines and backgrounds, including group exercises, student research presentations, experiential learning opportunities, and reading response papers. Because my courses are writing and discussion-intensive courses, I regularly use in-class activities and innovative mediums of instructional technology that encourage student engagement with concepts and materials. Certain group exercises, like writing skits and making maps, require students to apply shared knowledge to create a collaborative analytical project. Utilizing digitized archival collections, videos, and lectures as Prezis, I use technology to engage students in primary source analysis in new ways. When analyzing the connections between military and environmental tourism in Hawai‘i, students merge these topics by designing their own critical aloha shirts that shed light on the commodification of Hawaiian people, culture, and land in Hawaiian history. Playing with visuality and materiality in the classroom, such as having students design fashion inspired by class readings and construct [edible food flags](#) based on their family histories invites students to explore how seemingly non-academic topics like popular culture warrant deeper discussion of power and identity. My shyest students tasked with using food to analyze their own transnational and cross-cultural identities jump at the opportunity to present their family and community histories to their peers.

Throughout my courses I offer opportunities for students to take learning beyond our class session to make course material personally and professionally relevant. When advising the final projects of my graduate urban design students at Ball State University, I had students demonstrate evidence of fieldwork, through interviews and secondary source research, to ensure they were accounting for the diverse impacts of their design proposals. In my undergraduate classes, I encourage students to add depth to course material through independent field trips, film screenings, and service learning opportunities. Visits to historic sites, events, and cultural productions, as well as community-driven oral history and digital humanities projects help students make deeper connections to course material while taking responsibility for their own learning and engagement.