I have been fortunate to teach introductory and advanced courses at substantially different public and private institutions. This breadth has led me to develop a flexible pedagogy through which I teach independent intellectual skills to students from diverse educational backgrounds. By emphasizing challenging texts, independent critical skills, and active discussion, this pedagogy reflects my most deeply felt teaching goal: the classroom as an intellectual community.

All of my courses use diversely challenging readings – from Jean Toomer, Elizabeth Bowen, and Paul Muldoon to an anthology like *Ways of Reading* and contemporary political journalism – to engage students with different voices, genres, and cultures. In a course like my upper-level Modern English Literature seminar, this is essential: the breadth of twentieth-century British, Irish, and postcolonial readings supports a comparative approach that simultaneously serves the curriculum, examines changes in the categories of modern and English literatures, and encourages students' own analysis of those literatures. In this as in other classes, my research in Irish literature strengthens my teaching by connecting different texts, periods, cultures, and fields of study.

With such readings, my courses also strengthen students' abilities to develop independent arguments about challenging materials and to communicate those arguments in writing. In a recent class, for example, we spent a month carefully reading and re-reading *Heart of Darkness*, along with relevant texts by Achebe and others. My goal was not just to teach students about Conrad, but to teach them how to read a rich, complex text. Accordingly, rather than assigning an essay topic, I required students to develop their own critical analyses as we read the novel. At the same time, class discussion helped students learn to read productively, so that they were challenged rather than frustrated. This approach led them to think more independently, while also allowing them to work at their own pace, benefits they acknowledge in their evaluations.

This independence requires that students learn not just how to avoid mistakes, but how to make informed choices that clarify their writing. Toward this end, I assign multiple forms of writing – including journals, drafts, peer reviews, revisions, and websites – each with its own articulated goals. By emphasizing a writing process centered on revision, my comments in both small and large classes help students learn in a more individual, targeted way than is possible through class instruction alone. These methods distribute a substantial workload while steadily reinforcing a practice of revision that sharpens the students' understanding of their own work; in other words, these methods help students learn how to learn independently, during my class and after it, whether they are learning to write more effectively, read more critically, or both.

Because I see it as central to such a learning process, my courses at all levels of the curriculum heavily emphasize discussion. I consistently use technology to support this emphasis. In my current courses, students use online journals to post questions about the readings and to respond to their peers' questions. Our discussion then builds on these posts, drawing together different activities and giving students a material sense of their role in the class. In support of these same goals, I have also assigned collaborative websites – such as a set of annotations for Patrick McCabe's contemporary Irish novel *The Butcher Boy* – that students develop from their journals and from our discussions. These assignments have proven effective in helping students become more self-aware about how they read, how they think, and how they write.

In my future teaching, I will be excited to continue using these methods and materials to engage students in a classroom community that challenges them to refine their own critical skills.