

# Teaching Philosophy

## Lawrence Altrows and Corinne Hart – Joint Statement

Although we have included individual teaching philosophies in this nomination package, it is important to preface these with some comments about our joint philosophy for CINT 917.

As an interdisciplinary teaching team we believe in the importance of being supportive and facilitative, while at the same time encouraging student self-direction, self-management and a spirit of discovery. By this we mean that while we provide the scaffolding to support student learning, we do not provide the answers, or even at times, the direct route to the end. Rather, we encourage students to work through the inherent muddiness of community work, recognizing it as a first step to a deeper understanding.

We both believe that students must be active, reflective learners. As such, we strongly promote a number of reflective processes in our teaching. For example, we place a great deal of emphasis on the individual reflection that occurs within the experiential workbook, as well as the group reflection that is part of the large and small group discussions each week.

We believe strongly in the importance of process in the context of learning. Specifically, we feel that it is important for students to be cognizant of processes inherent in community and interdisciplinary work, and to focus less on a pre-defined outcome. Although ultimately outcomes are important, if for nothing else than to help students see what they have accomplished, it is more often than not the journey that allows for the greatest learning. As a result, evaluation strategies in CINT 917 place a high emphasis on how, not only what students have learned.

We believe in the spirit of wonderment and inquiry. We recognize that we do not have all the answers; rather, answers develop through the process of critical reflection and questioning. Our joint teaching allows students to explore issues, ask questions, and develop (and recognize) their own expertise. Within this, we believe that learning cannot be 'silo-ed', but should be transferable to a range of different situations and contexts.

We also believe that as teachers, we have a number of responsibilities. The first is to respect and acknowledge where students come from, and to use this as a starting point. Notions of context thus underlie our insistence that community members are registered as full students, rather than auditors or volunteers in the course. It also underlies our belief that the students (university and community) bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the course. We also believe that we, as interdisciplinary co-teachers, we must model the principles of interdisciplinary work. As such, we work together in a collegial manner, each bringing our own strengths and areas of expertise to a synergistic relationship where the whole is more than what each of us could contribute individually. We believe that it is our responsibility to show students, in a living way, how different disciplinary lenses can support one another. This is done through joint grading of assignments, sharing all aspects of teaching, and modeling how to negotiate differing views.

Our joint philosophy builds from our individual philosophies of teaching. The following therefore, outlines what each of us brings to the team.