I am a historian at heart. That does mean that I think we should live in the past. With that said, I do think there is value to studying the past because it provides a perspective for the present. Valuing historical education does not make me a perennialist, although I do believe education should include a coherent, worldly curriculum. Rather, it makes me the type of person who wants to grasp that historical knowledge and shape it into something personal and relevant, not just for myself, but for my students.

Think of my educational philosophy like an old building. Picture a Victorian Era house with a solid base, three large pillars in front, and two spires that stretch endlessly into the sky. And hanging just above the massive oak door is a simple sign that reads, “Enter all Ye Pragmatists.” Once you are inside, the experience of education comes alive. Because I am defining myself as a pragmatist, it would be fair to assume that I align myself with progressivism as well, but in a Dewey-like way, meaning the experience of the child is at the heart of their education. To nurture this type of education, my job as a teacher will be to provide opportunities for students to create experiences for themselves, either through assignments or by their own initiative. The students’ job will be to take these experiences and apply them to a much broader spectrum. Because pragmatism also stresses the importance of solving societal problems, I can take the history education that I have provided to my students and help them associate the past with the present. We can learn from these past experiences to solve the present problems, or at least take the past and use that experience to provide a new course for the present. My pragmatic philosophy also allows me to provide a morally inclined, societal minded, democratic approach to not only the history lessons, but the hidden curriculum as well. One of the reasons I love history is because there are enduring, positive truths to democracy that do create a better society. Through the transactions I create with my students, or the transactions they create, we can apply these democratic values to our education and to society.

The meanings behind the experiences the students have are the most important part. It is not enough to just have the experience, but it is essential that the student takes away some profound idea from the experience. Whether they utilize this meaning for personal advancement or for the advancement of society is their choice. I do not want to be the kind of teacher who focuses the whole class on me and my lecture, rather I would like to allow the kids to present projects to the class and let them do the teaching. This method would be consistent with the progressivism that is associated with pragmatism

I aligned my previous philosophy with existentialism. I still think that students and teachers should be held accountable for their actions and that free thinking should be encouraged, but I don’t think that the broader concept of existentialism applies so much anymore. The philosophy of existentialism says we create what being a human means through action. It also says that by living one way, it shows that all mankind live that way. This it is not applicable to how I want to teach. I want to focus on how kids can learn in a hands on environment by reading books, doing labs, creating mock trials in class, or group projects. By doing so, students will learn that each person is different and we cannot assume that humans are a particular way. Life is the ultimate experience, and we only get one of them. If I can provide the opportunity for students to have meaningful experiences that they can use and learn from, I will be a successful teacher.