Consploring to Learn New Ideas and Concepts

I loved "consploring" the woods around our subdivision with my enthusiastic dad. I chose the places we walked, and Dad taught me how to pet lethargic bumblebees on cold days and identify flowers and fungi genera from *phaecilia* to *cantharellus.* He answered innumerable questions and guided me through field guides to answer questions that stumped him. Over time our consploring range expanded to public lands across the West where Dad helped me through dozens of Jr. Ranger programs, and we both expanded our understanding of the spaces we loved. The way Dad and me consplored is how I try to teach. *I am a passionate and supportive guide who develops structured learning experiences that resonate with students from various backgrounds, and I responsively adapt to student interests and new conditions.*

Before every environmental science and policy course, I survey students to determine which problems and places they care about. I read their responses multiple times and practice names so I can connect lives to the course. In class, I have students share their favorite outdoor spaces and pronouns and we set class norms collectively. This helps build community. I share my diagnoses and neurodivergence (anxiety-depression and ADHD) to destigmatize mental health and the specific environments (Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument), communities (Southern Utah and Oregon), people (indigenous and rural), and histories that inspire my research, teaching, and approach to solving environmental and social problems. Then I have every student share the places that matter to them. I make sure students feel seen. I shocked my former Energy Politics student Al, when I greeted him by name in a parking lot, two years after the class, and asked how his gardening was going. Al couldn't remember my name and was excited I remembered that he loved cultivating native plants for traditional indigenous uses. Al remembered that I encouraged him to explore coal-fired power plant decommissioning in Southern Utah for his final project because he was interested in Navajo plant traditions.

Even if students feel safe and connected to the materials, effective guides need to provide consistent structures to turn their passion into effective consploring. I structured my energy politics course around a scaffolded policy memo where students argued for implementing a new energy policy, in a place they cared about. Students sequentially developed a short proposal, annotated bibliography of 5 quality sources, outline, rough draft, and a final memo. Working with the ELI Review staff at UCSB, I created specific and structured peer feedback assignments for each component. Students received and provided feedback at each step while TAs provided feedback on the proposal and outline. While I guided students through threshold concepts like intermittency and baseload power, they expanded my horizons and helped me think about crude oil energy systems in Hawaii and solar arrays in Western Germany; in other words, we had the best time consploring energy politics.