As a teacher, one of my main goals is to encourage critical thinking. In discussion sections I regularly ask students to think about current happenings in sport, and how the ideologies we are focusing on at that time may have influenced that moment. For example, the Friday before the Super Bowl I showed students a commercial featuring Katie Sowers. Many students talked about gender ideology and the masculinized space of football, others highlighted Sowers’ whiteness and the fact that many women of color would not have gotten the same opportunity, while others focused on her sexuality and the homophobia in American sport. By urging students to think critically about this commercial, they were able to draw connections between lecture content and the current sporting moment.

Additionally, as a teacher, I hope to encourage lifelong learning. Part of the work I do in the classroom is to get students to think of the ways sports can be more diverse and more inclusive. The second half of the semester is spent thinking through ideologies of race, ethnicity, and religion in sport. In this unit, students are asked to step outside of their understandings of sport as a meritocracy, and to confront things like white privilege, experiences of Black, Latinx, and Asian American athletes in sport, and discussions of religions in sport. The final project that students do is a diversity dialogue, which is a recorded conversation between four to five students. In this conversation they respond to one another regarding the things they most understood and the things they understood the least. Students are then asked to discuss ways in which they would change sport and what sorts of strategies they would use and why. Many of them mention things they had not previously considered before taking the class.

One of my favorite parts of teaching is advising and getting to know my students. We start the first discussion section by making name tags and discussing preferred pronouns, so that we can all get to know one another and be respectful of one another’s preferences. This encourages them to get to know each other’s names as well, and in the discussion environment we are in, where occasional uncomfortable topics may come up, I find this to be incredibly important. I also hold weekly office hours and encourage my students to come by if they have questions or concerns, or if they simply want to chat about projects and ideas. I regularly have students come to my office, and the first thing I ask them is how they are doing. In my own experience, taking that extra moment to chat with a student outside the confines of the class makes it much easier for them to reach out if they are having a hard time or need some extra help.