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Teaching Moment (Teaching)

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Associate Professor of French
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What I like in a classroom is to have students who come in with a very high level of awareness of their responsibility for their involvement in the learning process. I believe that they must share the responsibility for their learning, and respond as engaging learners. It's something that I'm excited about and something I expect.

Having students who come prepared and ready to challenge me and are ready to do that in an engaging way, makes me want to continue doing what I do.

I had a student who thought she just had to say what I wanted her to say. I said, 'No, don't repeat what I just said. Show me you can add to it or challenge it in a critical way. Make sure that what you're adding to it is striking and convincing.' She was eventually able to do it, and that gave me great satisfaction.

When you have students who are able to come up with an end product—the outcome of a research project, for instance—that wows you, a paper that is something where you say, 'I want to read that again,' that makes it all very meaningful. When a student sees things that you did not see right away in a text, when a student gives a reading you are not expecting, that puts you in the place of the learner. It's something very humbling. It creates a collaborative learning environment that benefits us all.

Creating opportunities that enable students to interact with people who are directly affected by global issues, such as oppressive patriarchal systems in the modern African nation-state, is one part of my meaningful experiences here at Colby. Students enrolled in my course on space, gender, and body in Francophone Africa had the chance to interview female refugees who reside in Portland, Maine, and who came from Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola. This was a way to have an authentic dialogue about narratives of identities through female immigrants/refugees who are experiencing issues we are reading about in the classroom.