

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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The heart of my teaching philosophy centers on the concept that effective teaching involves providing students with the fundamental tools they need to learn. In this statement I attempt to describe how this philosophy - and its progression over several years of teaching - is exemplified in the way I conceptualize and structure my courses, present material to the class, and perhaps most importantly, the manner in which I approach interactions with students. Essentially, my pedagogical values are illustrated in my behaviors and provide the framework from which I reflect on all actions as an instructor. As a teacher, I seek to offer students the tools to learn, to ensure that my classroom environment is one that facilitates the use of these tools, and to make certain I never lose sight of the needs of my audience.

I view my role as that of a skilled professional guiding active learners in the course of constructing their knowledge base. The process is more reflective of a sensitive scaffold in which I work to gauge the initial proficiency of the students and afford them with the necessary resources to construct and integrate new knowledge. An essential component to this process of guided participation entails providing the opportunity for the students to demonstrate how to use the skills they develop in the course. For example, the basic material for *Research Methods* and *Statistical Methods for Psychology* - two courses I have taught on numerous occasions - is often intellectually challenging and dry, which many students may find daunting. Therefore, my objective is to instruct the students in methodological techniques and relevant statistical analytical tools, and then provide the opportunities for them to use these skills in a series of applied, cooperative tasks. Activities are varied and range from applied statistics assignments in which the class works together as a whole, to small peer review sessions where students are encouraged to evaluate and comment on their peers' original research ideas and written skills. In each of my courses, I require that students not only comprehend and apply information, but that they hone and develop a variety of skills - from oral and written communication to problem solving and abstract thinking. From my perspective, it is necessary to incorporate a range of instructional resources and activities to ensure the development of such advanced skills.

Upon providing the necessary tools for a deep understanding of the material, I think it is imperative to create an atmosphere that allows for the use of these tools. Thus, I seek to craft a classroom in which every student feels comfortable expressing ideas, working with others, asking questions, and providing answers even in instances where there is a level of uncertainty involved. I stress our desire to attain a common goal, and attempt to build a sense of community, subsequently facilitating the educational process. I strive to utilize a variety of practices and keep time allotted for pure lecture to a minimum, opting instead for class discussions, dyadic and small group work, and the aforementioned activities that provide possibilities for every student to have a voice and be heard if they so choose. The standards I set for my students are high and the coursework is rigorous. In turn, I instill that everyone in the class is capable of succeeding and performing to meet the goals of the course. There is no hesitation to use words of encouragement and appreciation as I indeed try to make learning accessible and exciting. The students, as individuals and a group, remain my central focus in the classroom.

Consequently, I feel that all my attempts to convey the material in a comprehensible format and create an atmosphere conducive to learning would be for naught if I neglected to consider the varying skill levels and interests of all students. Our interaction is vital to the pursuit of scholarship and I am receptive to their demands on my time outside of class, as well as observant of their reactions in class. Thus, I continually re-evaluate the progress of a course in order to ensure that students learn. It is futile to let the syllabus strictly guide the progression of the course if there becomes a clear need to spend additional time on certain material. Alternatively, it is necessary to find a balance between attending to the needs of the entire class and not compromising the goals of the course. This is a difficult issue, but one that is easily attained if the students are kept at the forefront. I recognize that my job as an instructor includes much more than the time actually spent in the classroom or during the course preparation. Fulfillment of my goals requires that I remain accessible, approachable, and available outside of class. As a result, I gladly offer this time to reach the students who may need additional assistance to that which can be offered in the traditional course period. This is critical in recognizing that the students are individuals and the learning process is different for everyone.

Ultimately, my goal as a teacher is quite simple: I seek to be the most *effective* instructor I can be. In turn, this overarching pursuit guides how I structure, plan, think, react, and behave as an educator. My objectives drive everything about my teaching style and my philosophy is not abstract, but rather demonstrated in all that I do to guarantee my aspirations as a teacher are met. Given the positive feedback I have received from my students, I am confident that the application of my teaching practices is quite successful.

My experience as an instructor at Loyola University Chicago and Northwestern University has indeed provided me with the opportunity to grow and mature as an educator. I have taught multiple sections of *Statistical Methods in Psychology*, *Research Methods*, and *Laboratory in Developmental Psychology* to students enrolled in traditional undergraduate and continuing education programs. In addition, I have supervised a number of students involved in independent research projects at both Loyola University Chicago and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I consider this individual mentoring to be key to students' advanced development and relish opportunities to offer this focused guidance. Given the breadth of material that I have covered, as well as the diversity of the audiences that I have taught, I have truly been able to develop my skills during my teaching career. I look forward to continually expanding my expertise in both the classroom and the research-training context.

In conclusion, I am not only well prepared to teach a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses, but I am committed to holding my students and *myself* to high standards. I thoroughly enjoy the teaching process and seek to continually advance as an educator, ensuring that I constantly maintain my focus on treating all students as active participants in the learning process. Therefore, I believe that my training and dedication will provide an excellent match for the program in Developmental Psychology at XXXXX where the practice of teaching is associated with academic rigor and integrity.