

Re: Teaching Philosophy

Through hard work and experimentation, I've become an experienced and award-winning instructor. Part of my success is simply the sheer number and range of opportunities I've had to develop my approach: I've taught lower- and upper-division courses; conceptual, regional and thematic topics; freshman-interest courses, large lecture surveys, and senior internship, research and practicum seminars; face-to-face, online, hybrid, and field-based versions; and I've offered these in term-long, truncated summer-session, and 10-day intensive programs. This has required strategies, techniques and approaches for a wide variety of formats and contexts.

Above any one philosophy, I'm committed to the incorporation of an engaged and informed pedagogy. I feel that teaching should incorporate a variety of tools, techniques and perspectives to help students gain an appreciation of the complex and beautiful world we live in. Yet this world is dynamic. As a result, I consider myself a guide or "learning facilitator" rather than an all-knowing, content-delivery specialist. I strive to model how an educated mind might think about big-picture concepts, patterns, and processes and I use captivating empirical examples that help highlight the interconnectedness of many of our most urgent social, economic, and environmental problems.

At a practical level, I emphasize critical, divergent, and spatial thinking frameworks to provide opportunities for students to practice flexibility, open-mindedness, skepticism, and reflection. Exposing students to a range of ideas and opinions shows how people not only think differently, but also how a diversity of perspectives are developed and maintained. In my experience, a focus on scientific inquiry helps students identify assumptions in their own ideas and opinions, allowing them to simultaneously recognize and respect the validity of other perspectives. I believe this is also critical for understanding the trajectories of the history of science, and in the evolving nature of scientific consensus itself.

I am also convinced of the value and utility of using an interdisciplinary, experiential learning approach whenever possible, both in laboratories and beyond. The world outside the classroom in particular provides unexpected opportunities to see processes directly, which has some of the most transformative potential of any pedagogical approach. I also strongly believe it is my duty to impart transferable skills – to help students make sense of the staggering amount of information accessible via the internet, for example. Whatever the context, I try to inspire students to see connections, patterns, and interactions, and to take this understanding into the world and put it to use.

In summary, my teaching philosophy is responsive, evidence-based, and empirically driven. My regional interests and research specialization is complementary to the desired spatial and disciplinary focus of the Geography Program and the college. Additionally, I am adaptable to changing teaching/curricular, research or service needs: although I have a certain amount of skills and experience in particular courses or perspectives, I am open to learning, collaborating and innovating. I emphatically believe that, with enough lead-time, I could effectively teach any course. In short, I feel I have the experience to allow me to be effective and successful in this position, and my teaching philosophy is a key component of this success.