

Philosophy of Teaching

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My philosophy of teaching is comprised of a set of beliefs about students, teachers, learning, and the educational process as a whole. According to Boyer (1990), teaching is but one component of scholarly activity. We must unite the scholarship of teaching with integration, discovery, and application in order to for us to become truly effective academicians. The teacher-scholar understands the material deeply enough to organize and present the content in a manner that students will understand, synthesize existing knowledge, demonstrate a commitment to developing new knowledge, and apply knowledge to solving problems. With Boyer's (1990) model in mind, the following represent some of the core beliefs that I incorporate into my teaching and student interactions to enhance my role as a teacher and a scholar.

I believe that learning should be an active and authentic process. Teaching is much more than the transmission of information from the teacher to the student. It is an effort to provide the student with skills that will be useful to them in their future endeavors. I use a variety of activities during every course I teach. In some cases this results in individual activities while in other cases students are grouped with others with similar interests. I design personalized projects that allow enough flexibility that the students can relate them to their own areas of interest and expertise.

I believe that teaching requires ongoing assessment. End-of-semester evaluations can provide valuable summative information regarding a course. These evaluations indicate strengths and suggest areas of improvement. However, they are not sufficient to ensure ongoing feedback for the best possible teaching. I utilize exams and assignments to adapt presentation styles and content as necessary. I listen to and solicit informal student comments regarding individual assignments and activities to provide specific information as the semester progresses. I intend to include additional forms of evaluation such as a mid-term evaluation in all future courses to allow mid-semester modification if necessary.

I believe that each student learns in his or her own way. Some students learn best through listening to lectures while other students require visual imagery to retain information. Other students require active engagement with the material, and a combination of all of these methods is typically beneficial for all students. As a teacher, I strive to address these needs and many others by presenting information in a variety of ways. When I interact with students in the classroom I have visuals such as PowerPoint slides, videos, or handouts, along with group activities and discussions during class sessions. Content must demonstrate important concepts in a meaningful and memorable way.

I believe that teaching should be a collaborative effort between the teacher and each student whenever possible. Each student has different needs and expectations of their learning process. They come from unique backgrounds and have varying goals for their future. As a teacher, I facilitate discussions among the students to identify their individual and collective needs and expectations, and I work to meet those needs as best as possible. I negotiate the substitution of assignments for other activities that are more meaningful, and encourage each student to make the content more relevant to them through open dialogue and frequent use of activities.

I believe that teaching occurs outside of the classroom, and this opportunity is extremely valuable. As a teacher, a large amount of time is spent in, and preparing for, classroom instruction. However, this is not the only place where teaching occurs, and other interactions can have an even larger impact. I have a

responsibility to promote student learning outside the classroom through effective advising as well as through various forms of mentoring, such as serving as a student group advisor or through providing opportunities for undergraduate research. This is a valuable way to model scholarship and show my students what I do beyond the classroom to give them a better understanding of my more holistic role as a scholar.

I believe that teaching requires a commitment to continue learning. An effective teacher is a perpetual student. I must seek out new information in a variety of ways, including through collaboration with my students and colleagues. I conduct my own research to further enhance my knowledge and complement my classroom activities. I participate in an array of professional organizations, reading scholarly journals and attending conferences to renew my commitment. These efforts combined with many others are all aimed at enhancing my effectiveness as a teacher and a scholar.

I believe that I am a role model, and my decision whether to be a good one has important moral implications. There are numerous areas in which a teacher serves as a role model for their students. I demonstrate the importance of seeking new knowledge by conducting research and by remaining current in my field. I express the importance of service through my active involvement in a variety of professional opportunities. I promote personal and social integrity through my own example and by holding students accountable when necessary. As a role model, it is my responsibility to exhibit the very best of our profession in all of my scholarly endeavors, both inside the classroom and out.

All of these beliefs combine to create a strong emphasis upon my students. I strive to connect with each student to ensure that his or her individual needs are met. I seek to enhance my teaching effectiveness through active participation in a variety of professional development opportunities designed to enhance my skills and continue my enthusiasm for learning. I look forward to the experiences that lie ahead, as they will continue my development as a teacher and a scholar.