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August 2018

Teaching Philosophy:

I think the main goal of teaching is not to tell students what to believe as much as to provide them with the tools they need to think independently and becoming self-directed in the understanding of the subject. Most of us are passionate about at least some controversial points of view in our field, and it can be challenging to avoid being dogmatic. I devote one lecture to the philosophy of learning early in most of my classes, to provide a framework for students to organize the more factual information presented for the remainder of the course.

My formal understanding of learning and memory also influences my teaching. Cognitive science has established that we learn best when we connect information to our existing knowledge and generate information actively. While teaching inevitably involves a certain amount of reciting facts that students are required to memorize for exams, providing a framework for them to actively participate in their education allows them to process the material at a deeper level. Therefore, I encourage discussion and emphasize demonstrations during class. I prefer long-answer exams to multiple-choice questions because this provides students practice and feedback on their writing and critical thinking. Though, I personally think that multiple-choice questions in the form of short quiz are a good practice to do after each chapter to check the knowledge gained from the students during the lectures. When possible, I structure courses to include projects so that students can take ownership of topics that

interest them. I also tend to heavily emphasize research methods, because understanding the process of creating knowledge facilitates critical thinking and provides a structure for integrating facts.

I like to always take the opportunity to praise students for their positive contributions and achievements. We cannot neglect the importance of this factor in the relationship between teacher and student. I believe that merely attending to this dimension in situations where it may not be explicit often provides opportunities to create a positive attitude in students that will make them enjoy taking responsibility for their learning process.

Students come with widely varying abilities and learning styles, so it is appropriate to provide lectures, exercises, and evaluations that work on more than one level whenever possible. While the higher performing students may be easier to work with, lower-performing students are also entitled to learning experiences that engage and reward them on their level. Unfortunately, we sometimes have to accept that there are students who need to show more responsibility. Finding that happy medium between upholding academic standards while at the same time providing a compassionate service requires experience, at least as much as having the right philosophy.