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## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My philosophy of instruction rests on fostering self-instruction, formulating questions rather than answers, and establishing high expectations. I believe that teachers have limited ability to teach students anything. Instead, they can only motivate students to teach themselves. Therefore, I use Socratic methods in the classroom because the ability to ask questions is integral to self-instruction. My primary pedagogical role is to help students learn how to search for and construct a complete answer as we work through the question-and-answer process. My goal is to stimulate active learning, appreciation for the art of questioning, and comfort with the idea that being wrong is a part of learning. In short, I seek to move students beyond the only occupation where the question is provided, i.e. being a student, to a continuous process of asking and answering questions, i.e. becoming a self-directed learner.

A teacher plays an important role in the management of interactions. While interactions, and thus knowledge, depend in part on the individual and the experiences that he or she brings with them, interactions can be somewhat guided, stimulated, or shaped by a teacher. The role of the teacher is to encourage learning on two levels, the basic and fact-oriented level and the more complex and challenging level in which skills or ways of thinking are developed (e.g. problem solving, critical thinking). Both types of knowledge are important as building blocks for the student to reach beyond his or her current level. A student who has learned should now be able to complete a task that is beyond his or her previous capabilities. The maturation of the individual is the ultimate goal. Movement on a scale of capabilities is the general mark of success rather than an absolute.

Through personal experience, I have learned that all students are not good at research before they move onto making stuff. Thus, it is my job to lead them to think first and get known well about their design topic before they sit in front of computers. The teacher selects materials designed to interest the student, prepare her or him for future classes, and develop useful skills. The teacher acts as a guide and may stage learning opportunities. The teacher's role has elements of expert, facilitator, and person. Expectations of students should be generally high but attainable. Establishing high expectations can create an abrasive atmosphere. To avoid this, I need to inject empathy and humanness into the learning process by getting to know my students as individuals and as a class. A key is a series of evaluation, including (1) inviting students to my office for conversation and an oral evaluation of the class, (2) an extensive end-of-quarter evaluation, and (3) a one-page evaluation during the quarter. Extensive use of evaluation permits the course to be adjusted during the quarter, as well as permitting a continuous check on quality.

In-class time and assignments incorporate a range of activities and methods so that all students have a chance to contribute, regardless of their own perceived strengths or weakness. In-class time consists of a mix of lectures, small-group discussion, large-group discussion, films, guest speakers, simulations, and presentations. Assignments combine objective tests (where appropriate), research papers, journals, media projects, and other content-specific exercises. I am always willing to assist the student along the way, working with them individually, reviewing rough-drafts, or helping them focus their work. These activities also give me an opportunity to get to know my students better.

In every-day practice, I implement these ideals in the classroom in a number of ways. Teaching is rarely "value-free" and my own classes carry messages of openness to difference, respect and dignity for all peoples, intelligent risk-taking, fairness, and questioning assumptions. I hope that in the course of the term, students will learn factual knowledge, skills such as critical thinking and improved researching, re-examination of their environment, and application of knowledge to their own lives. I also hope to meet whatever goals or expectations they may bring to the class.

As I intimated previously, my philosophy of teaching and its implementation are the result of trial-and-error, advice from other instructors, and experience. While student reactions suggest that my skills have improved, I have continued to refine my approach through professional, peer, and student evaluations; creative planning; and keeping up on the literature. The ultimate goal, of course, is to always be able to do something that exceeds my previous abilities to keep learning.