

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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I believe that philosophy, as a discipline, provides a platform to understand and deeply consider different aspects of our individual worlds. I also believe that philosophy does this by teaching students *how* to think rather than *what* to think. Because of the focus on ‘how’ instead of ‘what’, I do not feel that it is my goal – as an instructor – to merely relay content to the students; instead, I use parts of the traditional canon as examples of how others have interrogated their own worlds. Simply, my teaching philosophy is to help students develop the techniques that they can use to understand their own worlds.

My teaching philosophy is clearly pragmatic. I realize that each student has different goals and values and, as such, should be encouraged to develop along their own paths and in light of their own experiences. In this capacity, I see myself as a *guide* to the students rather than a *teacher*. My role as a guide is to help my students engage their worlds by showing them different ways that others have engaged their own worlds and by helping students recognize and think through conflicts between canon and their own experiences. Critical to my teaching philosophy is the role of experience – both the experiences that each student brings into the classroom and the experiences that they have in the classroom. For this reason the fundamental role of experience undergirds my teaching methodology, classroom activities, and learning objectives.

To be clear, I do not eschew formal teaching methods or traditional content. Lectures and classroom dialogue are critical to the development of languages that help students construct their experiences with the material. However, structuring lectures and dialogue around current events (where possible) and personal experiences (both the student’s and the instructor’s) can help to highlight the experiential realities that, I believe, ultimately guide learning. In addition to lectures and dialogue, group discussions and projects help to develop students’ abilities to co-develop by providing opportunities to engage and create across different perspectives. Co-development helps students to understand their role in broader communities and gives them space to understand how their own experiences either align or split from other student’s experiences. This is critical to developing capacities for teamwork and, more importantly, social civility.

My teaching philosophy respects student’s individual experiences and places central focus on the learning experiences in the classroom. The instruction methodologies I use are not especially distinct from traditional teaching methods, which serves to highlight my fundamental perspective of education: I am, as an educator, helping to simultaneously teach students techniques to understand and consider their own worlds while initiating them into a developed intellectual world that comes complete with its own traditions and norms. Students need to be instructed in the norms of current academic culture – hence the traditional methods – while exercising their capacities to develop their own experiences despite the norms. It is my goal – in every classroom – to respect the power of education to shape experiences, provide opportunities for students to develop in light of personal goals and values, and act as a guide to help students understand current traditions and expectations so that they may succeed along whichever path they wish.