

## ACADEMIC TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

### What is Your 'Teaching Philosophy'?

You can begin by thinking about, 'what do you believe about teaching'; 'what do you believe about learning' and 'what are your goals for your students'. However, some people find it difficult to begin with such broad questions. You may find it easier to focus on specific aspects of teaching and classroom experiences before you can articulate your 'teaching philosophy'.

Begin by focussing on concrete components: What do you do in the classroom; What did you like when you were a student; What did you dislike; What worked or did not work for you as both a student and a teacher? When you ask these questions, remember to think about why and how, not just what.

As part of your teaching philosophy you can consider a variety of issues:

- **student population** (age, ability, background, year of study, grad students, adult learners and motivated students, students taking the course only for credit and so on)
- **class size and makeup** (is your teaching style affected by the number of students, can you teach 10 the same way you teach 200?; what about socio-economic background)
- **Level or type of courses** (introductory, electives, advanced courses, lectures, seminars, labs, research courses, technical courses and so on).
- **Institutional/department philosophy** (trends in the industry, trends in teaching, i.e. technology the pros and cons, and other relevant factors).

You should tie your belief in learning and teaching styles to the reality of teaching experiences. Your general teaching philosophy will have many different layers that are modified given the circumstances. Become conscious of these modifications and discuss your philosophy and styles with this in mind.

- **Classroom management** - open discussions, lectures, activities, student lead, lecturer lead
- **Student interactions** - individual meetings, mentoring, online contact, established office hours, flexible office hours, seminars, emails
- **Grading options** - essays, exams, participation marks, assignments, projects, presentations
- **Course design** - essays, research projects, group projects, team presentations, case studies, research assignments, lab work, group research projects, case studies, role play

When discussing your Philosophy remember the STARR format (situation, task, action, result and relevance). You want to focus not on what you did (the facts are in your CV) but on **how** you did it, **why** you did it and how it is **relevant**.

Ask yourself, '**How do I encourage discussion and why is this important**', 'How do I communicate a complicated idea' and why is this important? Why did I chose a group research project or an essay for the assignment, what was my intention, why did I think this was an effective method of learning and evaluation. Focus on your actions and your understanding of your actions and their efficacy.

## PREPARING YOUR TEACHING STATEMENT

Prepare a **Teaching Statement** that is about 1 (maybe 2) pages in length (or as requested by the department). Remember to 'keep the students in mind' as you present your philosophy. When you discuss your innovative teaching materials and techniques, remember to discuss why these are effective and how they benefit the students. If you want to address 'challenges' of students focus on how you incorporate overcoming these challenges and not on being critical. For example, do not say 'I am frustrated with the poor writing skills of students in our industry'. Instead consider saying, 'I have found that some students struggle with writing skills and as a result I have \_\_\_\_\_.' Do not forget to incorporate your research in this discussion including how (if appropriate) you will involve students at all levels in your research and how your research will benefit your classroom. Be concise, clear and focus on you own knowledge and insights into why you teach and how others learn.