

Teaching Statement

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In what follows, I want to introduce you to my background and experience as an instructor of philosophy. I was granted a teaching assistantship immediately upon matriculation to the program Ph.D. program at USF in Fall 2000, and until Spring 2002 I worked as an assistant or grader for several courses, including Critical Thinking, Introduction to Formal Logic and Introduction to Philosophy. These courses were conducted by a large 'lecture' section administered by the main professor, and then split into small 'discussion sections' led by myself. During the '01-'02 school year, I was one of three teaching assistants in the department selected by the Chair and the Dean of the College to assist for an interdisciplinary program known as the 'Learning Communities.' I have been teaching my own classes since Fall 2002, after having received my Master's Degree. Since that time, I have been responsible for designing and teaching a wide range of classes—both from the core curriculum (Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Formal Logic) and advanced undergraduate courses in social and political theory (Social Philosophy, Philosophy of Marxism) and in the the history of philosophy (History of Modern, History of Analytic). During my time as a graduate student at the University of South Florida, I have had the opportunity to teach a diverse group of students. Teaching in a multicultural student population has aided my ability as an educator, having developing skills in communicating ideas to students from a variety of backgrounds. To this end, I always make an effort to include non-canonical and underrepresented voices in my courses.

From Fall 2005-7, I taught Acquisition of Knowledge for the Honors College at USF. It is an introductory level interdisciplinary course which is required for all incoming honors students, which covers classic texts in the history of epistemology and metaphysics from Plato to Russell. During that time, I also taught both Logic and Critical Thinking at the University of Tampa, a private liberal arts school. Since this Fall, I have been teaching at Denison University, a highly-selective liberal arts school in Ohio. Included in my regular philosophy courses were interdisciplinary seminars for the Honors Program at Denison, as well as teaching a freshman seminar for their First Year Program,.

In any course I teach, I have two distinct goals. First, I wish to present a given text rigorously and accurately, from within its historical context. I preface each new thinker with a short biographical lecture about her life, and about the intellectual milieu in which the text was composed. As a historian of philosophy, I believe it is absolutely necessary to acknowledge the contextual background in which the text was composed in order to properly understand the significance of the arguments. As to textual accuracy, I usually will spend about half the class presenting the most important passages to them, often reading directly from the text. Not only does this allow the student to “target” where the arguments lie in the text—but also to have a breakdown of the basic structure and significance of each part in terms of the whole, and *vice versa*. I prefer to teach *entire texts* rather than *excerpts* whenever I can.

My second goal is to make the study of philosophy relevant to the student's life. I try to make my classes largely discussion driven, allowing the students a chance to articulate the relevant ideas in their own words, and to enter the 'problem space' in which the text operates. I teach with energy and enthusiasm, which communicates itself to the class. As a young academic, I find that I can relate to my students well; I often use examples pertaining to popular culture in order to relate the text to their lives—or, humor to 'entertain' the students and to make them feel more comfortable within the classroom setting.

Overall I have found interacting with students, and aiding them to become more careful thinkers and writers extremely rewarding. I am proud of the fact that my evaluations have always been above departmental and institutional averages. But most of all, I am proud of having inspired the love of wisdom in many of my former students, several of whom each semester have decided to study philosophy more seriously, either as a major or a minor—and even some to study philosophy on the graduate level. I look forward to continuing my success as an Assistant Professor of Philosophy.