My Teaching Philosophy

I believe that in the classroom, the majority of undergraduate students genuinely desire the opportunity to learn and that what students want most is a teacher that has an *authentic* yearning to stimulate knowledge in novel and effective ways. I believe students respect teachers who whole-heartedly believe in their students' capacity to excel. To this end, I believe teachers may best support their students by creating an environment that frames the acquisition of knowledge as *exciting, powerful, and possible.* As such, three core principles guide my teaching: 1) making ideas memorable and useful to students, 2) teaching students to think critically about psychological science, and 3) fostering active learning and pride in one's acquired knowledge.

Effective communication of course materials to students is predicated on active engagement. Thus, I believe that as a teacher, it is critical that I make the ideas that I am conveying both memorable and useful to students. To accomplish this, I continually employ examples from contemporary media (e.g., popular reality T.V. shows, iFunny, social networking sites) to make the material memorable. However, making material memorable to students goes beyond utilizing entertaining television clips to illustrate a concept. Instead, it also includes being mindful of including cultural diversity in examples and going beyond the use to heteronormative examples during lecture. As I have evolved as a teacher, I have developed a greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of diversity in the content of my examples. In doing so, I increase the chances of reaching all students in the classroom and conveying to each student my respect and interest in their success in the class.

Above and beyond the importance of effective communication of course specific content, it is arguably equally as important to me that I infuse the course with exercises that teach students to learn how to *think critically.* This goal directly translates into a key issue in psychology that I teach, which is the vital importance of understanding that *psychology is a science.* To demonstrate this, I utilize an activity that requires students in my General Psychology course to gather news articles from media that make pseudoscientific claims, to consider how we can scientifically evaluate the validity of such claims, and if falsified, how those claims affect the image of psychology as a science. After completing the assignment, students have presented their findings to the class, including pseudoscientific claims such as how an obscure therapy "cures" autism in the course of a few hours. Through this exercise, students are urged to think like a scientist and be an informed consumer of information. Students have commented that this exercise has changed the lens through which they read popular media and evaluate claims therein. As a teacher, such feedback is crucial to aligning evaluation of student learning with my learning goals.

Finally, I aim to promote mastery and a deep processing of the course content rather than simply "getting the grade". My classes regularly employ in-class exercises to facilitate deeper processing of the material. Through active learning, I aspire to make students genuinely *excited* about their intellectual capacities, curiosities, and where that can take them. One way I seek to inspire confidence in my students is to introduce in-class activities by asking them to "put their 'psychologist hat' on and be the expert!" This gives students the opportunity to showcase their knowledge by applying concepts taught in class using real-life role-plays. Thus, one of my favorite methods of teaching is to act as a facilitator for group activities. I want the students to see beyond what they currently are and to think what they could do with their knowledge in the future.

In this regard, I would summarize my teaching philosophy as one in which I aspire for my teaching methods to activity engage and motivate *all* students to feel a personal connection to the material at hand, irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. When this connection is made, I believe students feel invested in the course. Students learn to value learning for the sake of learning, to have *pride* in their knowledge, and to ultimately translate that into considering other opportunities they might pursue to honor their intellect. My experience in teaching has illustrated to me the vital role of continual feedback from students and self-assessment in order to improve my teaching techniques and maximize their learning. Through such evaluations, I look forward to the opportunity to continue to discover new ways of inspiring and promoting student learning within an atmosphere of intellectual enthusiasm and respect.

Example #2

Teaching Philosophy Statement

I love teaching when the learning in my classroom is palpable: When I can sense it in the quickening pace of a roundtable discussion or a student's visible delight in using newly learned jargon; when I can hear the excitement in students' testimonials about mastering skills that "made a difference" or theories that transformed practices and perspectives. I count these as teaching successes and make it a habit to reflect on their origins so that I can recreate the conditions for their occurrence again and again. My philosophy of teaching is informed by the material I teach, relevant scholarship, and the lessons I have learned from personal teaching successes and failures.

I believe that learner-oriented teaching promotes learning that is both purposeful and enduring. As a teacher, it is my responsibility to know who my learners are, what kinds of knowledge and experience they bring to the group, and what they want to achieve so that I can tailor a curriculum that fits their needs and yet leaves enough room to accommodate topics that emerge from group discovery. By assessing where my learners are with respect to our mutual learning goals, I can provide the scaffolding they need to build connections between what they already know and the new understandings they seek to create. I embrace case based teaching and other active learning activities because they stimulate intellectual camaraderie, argumentation, and cooperative problem solving and lay the groundwork for life-long collaborative practice.

I believe that teachers who demonstrate curiosity and passion about a subject area motivate students to learn and so choose to co-teach with colleagues whose scholarship and expertise are complementary to mine. Collaborating with faculty who are enthusiastic about using instructional methods rooted in social constructivist principles models how scholarship, teaching, and learning are enhanced by diversity and teamwork. It is also great fun.

I believe that W.B. Yeats captured the exhilaration of teaching when he wrote: *"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."* My goal as a 'teacher of teachers' is to ignite in my learners a passion to create an institutional teaching and learning environment that fosters a conflagration of educational experimentation and innovation at this academic health sciences center.