**Example Teaching Philosophy Statements**

This document includes four sample teaching philosophy statements. If you have time before the workshop, please read/skim through 1 or more of these examples. We will refer to this handout during the workshop, so please keep it handy.

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**Teaching Philosophy Statement: Megan Barker (Biological Sciences)**

Megan Barker, PhD (Biological Sciences, Simon Fraser University)

From https://meganbarkerase.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/barker-full-teaching-dossier.pdf

Shared with permission by Megan Barker.

 Learning begins with student engagement.

A successful educator works with a team

to facilitate this engagement by designing course structure

& materials that are relevant, are authentic, and challenge the students.

The end goal is to empower students to ask their own questions,

and to have the tools to solve problems. We are all in this together.

I am committed to impactful scientific education, where students learn to ask critical questions and solve relevant problems. A student asking a question is connecting with the course content, is working towards understanding, and is eager to learn more. More than ever, however, current students have many opportunities for distraction – from competing coursework and part-time jobs to the latest text message – all of which can hamper student engagement. Thus, to support students learning to ask and answer these difficult questions, my most important role of an instructor is to design course experiences that capture and keep student focus. Grounded in practices from the pedagogical literature, my approach involves three key elements.

First, I try to make the course material as relevant as possible to the students. This acts as a hook, and provides a foundation for students to find connections with the course. I make a point of learning about the members of my classroom and about their goals; I can then align the delivery to target their interests. Students also find their own connections to the material when working with fellow class members, and so I value group work and peer evaluation strategies. Finding relevance can make the difference between taking a required course for credit, and getting the most out of the course by fully engaging with it.

Secondly, students engage more when they are working with authentic content. In biology, we are fortunate to have many opportunities for students to work with real experimental data, at all course levels. In the classroom, I use case studies based on scientific papers as threads to develop ideas, and also build worksheets and problems based on data from the literature. In-class feedback then takes the form of critical discussion around on the reasoning for interpretation, and provides opportunity to model problem solving strategies. It is important that students are learning things with true purpose; thus, presenting students with authentic material supports this value and promotes mutual respect in the classroom.

Finally, the students should feel challenged by the course. Challenges intrigue students and underscore the motivation for learning fundamental material. Appropriately tuning the level of difficulty to the spectrum of individuals in the course is not trivial, but is informed by class data Barker Dossier – pg. 3 of 68 such as concept inventory scores, i>clicker distributions, and written formative feedback on which topics students struggle with most. These approaches are crucial in engaging students along their academic progress.

These three supports of relevance, authenticity and challenge draw together to engage students with course material and their own learning processes. As an instructor, I use these as a framework for class structure, delivery and assessments. They also help me engaged in the course itself, and act as reminders for where the students are at. Ultimately, I hope to be able to inspire these students to engage their curiosity, seek answers to their questions, and become independent lifelong learners.

To provide these supports within any given course, I see myself as one member of a teaching team: instructor(s), technician(s), teaching assistant(s). My postdoctoral work involved multisection courses taught by a group of instructors, and this experience strongly impacted my current beliefs about sharing classroom leadership to make our teaching accessible to our diverse population of students. Further, taking this collaborative approach to course materials design ensures continual renewal of course materials and approaches. This is a particularly useful factor in keeping our service courses fresh and relevant. Further, seeing teaching as a team sport has informed my views on curriculum; any course I teach is one out of a system, and it is incredibly beneficial to collaborate with other instructors (lecturers, researchers, sessionals, administrators; within and outside BISC) to provide value to all of our students.

**Teaching Philosophy Statement: Reed Ferber (Kinesiology)**

Reed Ferber, PhD ATC (Kinesiology, University of Calgary)

From ttps://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/Dossiers/Ferber\_Teaching%20Dossier.pdf

PART I: Approach to Teaching

**Teaching Philosophy**

My primary goal as an educator is to provide an environment where students can be critical thinkers. Moreover, I feel it very important to motivate the student through various methods such as cutting-edge research and/or clinically relevant examples to make the message as applicable as possible. Both of these concepts are employed in my lectures through the principles of (1) active participation both in class and in preparation prior to the lecture, (2) student interaction, and (3) effective communication. These principles not only apply to the student but also to myself, the educator. On the first class of every semester, I begin by clearly stating that “I work for them” and that “my job is to help them succeed.” I make no other claims than to work hard to help them do their best in the class. By showing and telling the students that I am committed to their education, I hope to inspire them and instill a passion for active learning and inquiry. It is through inquiry and active learning that we can shape and develop students to become future leaders in health and wellness.

**Core Philosophies**

My overarching teaching philosophy is to create a learning environment that enables critical thinking.

I believe that several factors must be set in place in order to allow the students to think critically about the course material. To this end, the following statements summarize my teaching philosophy that I bring into my teaching practice.

I believe it is critical to create transparency and trust within the classroom. The first step towards earning the student’s trust is to be transparent. I initially work towards transparency by clearly outlining my expectations at the beginning of each semester and explain the principle of student-driven learning. I explain how each lecture will involve a conversation rather than simply receiving information from me and I make it absolutely clear to the students that they must come prepared for each lab and lecture. I also make it very clear that my job is to ensure they are respected, treated fairly and that hard work will be rewarded.

I believe in a student-driven learning approach to teaching and learning. The main objective of learning is to require the students to be active and responsible participants in the process. I integrate the lecture-lab material as much as possible and I have also developed specific methods to train the GATs since they are an extension of me within the laboratory setting. Specifically, the GATs and I meet weekly and discuss their experiences from the past week so that everyone better understands what worked well and what didn’t work. We also develop common laboratory learning “stations” to ensure there is consistency across all labs and we create the next set of weekly practice exam questions.

I believe in incorporating advanced technologies. Technology touches nearly every part of our lives and research clearly shows that incorporating technology into our curriculum deepens and enhances the learning process. The plethora of resources of the online world also provide each classroom with more interesting, diverse, and current learning materials. Technology also changes the way teachers teach and offers instructors different and more effective ways to reach different types of learners and assess student understanding through multiple means.

I believe that students benefit from a variety of instructional methods. Not all students learn in the same manner, at the same pace, or in the same environment. Since some students are more visual, others more experiential, within the same lecture I use different learning strategies that depend on the material being taught and the focus of the class. However, the most important part of creating this environment, and determining which instructional methods the students need, I make sure I stop and listen to their needs, determine their strengths, and make appropriate decisions based on what will benefit the students the most.

I believe in an evidence-based approach to teaching and learning. I work very hard to keep myself current in the fields of educational research, pedagogy, and andragogy. Overall, the method in which I approach teaching and learning has been strongly influenced by major research findings. Moreover, I consider all student feedback to better understand how my instructional activities and decisions are affecting their learning and I use this feedback to make decisions about future course modifications.

I believe that teachers learn from teachers. Teaching should not be private and the way in which you grow and develop an expert teaching practice can only come from receiving feedback. I continue to seek out mentors for myself and I also look for opportunities to help my colleagues become better teachers.

**Teaching Philosophy Statement: Sarah Leavitt (Creative Writing)**

Sarah Leavitt, Creative Writing Program, UBC

From: <https://wiki.ubc.ca/images/d/d9/Teaching_Philosophy_Sarah_Leavitt_%28Final%29.pdf>

One afternoon about two years ago, I was riding the bus home from UBC and thinking about how to prepare students in my 200-level comics class for their first workshops. Many of them felt self-conscious about their drawing abilities and had never shown their creative work to anyone else before. I had come up with a solid structure to use for the workshops, but I wanted to find a way to talk about the attitude I hoped students would bring to the session. As I looked out the bus window at the rain, three words came into my head: respect, curiosity and delight. They glowed against the dark afternoon, and over the next few days they led me towards an articulation of my ideal workshop: a group of deeply engaged, curious and joyful students, working together to make each comic as strong and clear as it could possibly be. It soon became clear to me that these words were a challenge to myself as a teacher – I aspire to embody respect, curiosity and delight in all of my work with students.

*Respect*

I assume that all of my students are capable of making comics, and that their individual points of view and voices are valuable and worth sharing. I demonstrate my respect for their abilities by giving them challenging assignments and pushing them to revise and hone their work. In my experience, with enough support, students rise to the challenge of difficult work, and experience immense satisfaction when they have completed it. I respect student feedback during and after the course and shift my approach as needed. While I see it as my responsibility to provide information and guidance to students, I make it a priority to encourage collaboration and support among the students, encouraging them to build creative community among themselves.

*Curiosity*

I demonstrate genuine curiosity about students’ ideas and creative work, as well as aspects of their selves and their lives that they bring to class. I am eager to hear their opinions about assigned readings and about their colleagues’ work, and curious to see the results of their writing and drawing exercises. I encourage curiosity in their approach to readings and workshop sessions, prompting them to take comics apart and see how they were made, working to understand the impact of each choice a cartoonist makes. Exercises and assignments encourage experimentation and risk-taking, with “mistakes” or “failures” reframed as necessary steps towards learning the craft.

*Delight*

Delight is at the core of my teaching. Most students come into the class never having made a comic, and usually they haven’t drawn much since they were young children. Other students are experienced artists but are yearning to push their storytelling skills further. Often students haven’t read many comics, or have only read mainstream manga or superhero comics. As beginners start drawing, as more experienced students experiment and develop their skills, as new and dedicated comics readers explore the full breadth and depth of published comics, delight is a common response. “I can draw!” “I can express myself in a new and beautiful way!” “My drawings evoke laughter and tears in other students!” “Look at what this incredible cartoonist was able to do in this book!” This delight is a powerful force. It motivates students to tell their own stories, provides a sweet respite from the struggles in their lives, stretches their ideas of what is possible in writing and art. Most comics classes include laughter, emotional connections among students and breakthroughs in skills development or understanding of the form. By encouraging students to find something in each work that delights them, I believe that I’m highlighting the power of art that is the whole reason for wanting to encourage and shape new cartoonists, writers and other artists in the first place. We need their work to help us understand, mourn and celebrate our world.

**Teaching Philosophy Statement: Jonathan Verrett (Chemical and Biological Engineering)**

Jonathan Verrett, PhD. (Chemical and Biological Engineering, UBC-V).

From Reappointment 2 (2019) package. See:<https://blogs.ubc.ca/jverrett/r2-2019/>. Shared with permission by Jonathan Verrett.

My actions in the classroom are driven by providing a space where students can learn, experiment, ask questions, and ultimately master engineering professional practice. In order for students to be able to be successful at these tasks, I focus on building trust with students as well as creating significant learning experiences and I will further describe what I mean by these terms and how I enact them in my courses.

In Ken Bains’ book, “What the Best College Teachers do”, one chapter describes the importance of trust between instructor and student and how this is an essential part of good educational practice [1]. Through openness to dialogue and feedback, I show my students that I have their best interests at heart and that I want to see them learn and succeed. I encourage students in my courses to give me feedback and offer a variety of ways to do this including through face to face conversations, midterm course surveys, online discussion boards, and anonymous surveys accessible anytime during the course. I am open to their thoughts and suggestions and will acknowledge and respond to each of them, although the response may be that I will not act on a suggestion for a certain reason. I also communicate trust in my students by encouraging them to work together on assignments and giving them materials to help with their independent study. While doing this, I encourage them to ensure they truly understand the material as they will need to demonstrate it later on in the course they are in, as well as other courses, or in their professional practice. I believe this relationship of trust engages both students and myself in thinking about how we can further improve.

Dee Fink argues that in order to create significant learning experiences, teachers must challenge students, use active forms of learning, care about students, interact well and have good systems for feedback assessment and grading [2]. There are some linkages between this and Ken Bains’ observations on the importance of trust, notably in instructors showing their care for students, as well as interaction and feedback. In the courses I teach, I attempt to ensure students have sufficient practice with material and that they get feedback in a timely manner. Some of this is done in the class, through active learning techniques that I have incorporated such as with the use of worksheets and design examples. With practice outside of class, I have worked to develop more rapid and effective feedback tools through the development of online homework questions and use of instructional rubrics. These tools I have developed help to actively challenge students, and give them relevant and timely feedback to improve their learning.

By creating a strong relationship built on trust between students and myself, as well as combining elements that create significant learning experiences, I believe I am driving student learning forward and creating spaces where students can explore and ultimately be successful.