

## Teaching Philosophy

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Although this may sound contradictory, I believe the goal of a teacher is not simply to teach. It is about engaging, mentoring, inspiring, connecting with, and fostering learning amongst students, all with the hope that they leave a class with both tangible knowledge of the material and its broader implications in the real world. Ultimately, my main goal in teaching is not to cover all the content or teach through all the material. More importantly than that, I want to encourage students to develop a love for learning. For if they love to learn about the topic, then what and how much they learn is limitless. With more experience my philosophy on teaching will inevitably change, but even as it is improved upon, I will maintain my main goal of creating learners, not teaching students. To accomplish this goal, I intend to conduct my teaching with passion, engagement through humor and entertaining activities, inclusivity, and active learning strategies that encourage participation.

The first principle is fervor and passion, both about the course material and about teaching. In general, people who are enthused and care about a topic are willing to engage more, invest additional time and effort, and become self-directed learners about that topic. These, however, extend to teachers and students. Studies show that a teacher's enthusiasm can positively affect a student's achievement (Brigham et al., 1992) and intrinsic motivation (Patrick et al., 2000), so by being passionate each day I teach, I will be helping my students. Additionally, when I can be passionate about the subject, it will drive me to continuously dig deeper into the topic, which ensures I can deliver relevant and accurate information to my students. I plan to express my passion for the topic by putting extra effort into the lectures and class examples. I also intend to engage with the up-to-date scientific literature on the topic, so that my knowledge is relevant to the class I am teaching. After all, how can one expect a student to be passionate about learning a subject if the teacher isn't passionate about teaching it.

My second principle goes hand-in-hand with my first. My teaching style emphasizes engagement and creativity, which I foster through captivating lectures and the strategic use of humor to enhance learning. Humor is a powerful tool in the learning process. It can help alleviate stress that might come from learning new material, it can create a positive atmosphere, and helps build my rapport with the students, the latter of which is important for encouraging participation and promoting mentoring. Although I have little teaching experience, I have extensive experience presenting scientific ideas to diverse audiences. I have found that my presentations, no matter the depth of the subject matter, are more memorable and engaging when I can relate the subject matter to the audience in an entertaining way. I plan to bring this same strategy to my lectures. It is important to note that teaching is not all fun and games though. I will make sure to use this teaching methodology in a way that complements the learning objectives and respects the diversity of my students.

Third, I will strive to create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that places a lot of value on diversity. The ultimate goal is that students of all backgrounds will feel encouraged to actively engage in the learning process if they feel comfortable as a part of my class. To do this, I will include examples that help to represent underrepresented groups better and will make sure to highlight how scientists from these underrepresented groups contributed to the topics we are studying in class. In addition to helping students feel seen, I also find that promoting diversity of perspectives in the classroom is hugely beneficial to learning. Psychology has a long history of influential movements. From the rise of behaviorism to the cognitive revolution, the field of psychology has been molded by people approaching science from unique perspectives. In my classroom, I will encourage my students to share their unique experiences and perspectives. This will not only create a safe space for all students to share but will also help other students to remember and grow as learners.

Regarding how I lead a classroom, I believe in the power of active learning and strive to incorporate a variety of instructional strategies to cater to different learning styles. My goal is to help students become better learners, not simply be information processing machines. In addition to traditional lectures, I plan to encourage interactive discussions, unique activities that help students learn in different ways, and hands-on experience that show students how they can apply psychological concepts to real-world situations. For example, instead of simply teaching students about how to conduct a scientific study, whenever possible, I will allow them to do the science and learn from their errors and mistakes. For another example, instead of learning about two issues, students may be required to take either side and debate about which side is correct. By actively involving students in their own learning, I aim to enhance their critical thinking abilities, problem-solving skills, and ability to apply psychological principles to their personal lives.

Lastly, I strive to improve my teaching ability and refine my teaching philosophy as I gain more experience. After all, it would be hypocritical to ask one thing of my students but not lead by example in my own learning. In the little experience I have guest lecturing for both Cognitive Psychology and Animal Behavior, I provided student feedback surveys for the class to complete, specifically looking at how much information they retained and for feedback on how to improve my teaching ability. I then was able to use the feedback from prior lectures to improve future ones. As evident by the more in-depth information being retained, the improvements I made seemed to help the students learn more. I intend to continue developing as a teacher by placing emphasis on end of semester evaluations. As a new teacher, it is paramount that I continue to refine and adjust my teaching philosophy.

Classes I am qualified to teach:

- Cognitive Psychology
- Animal Behavior
- Intro to Psychology Research Methods and Statistics
- Sensation and Perception
- Hormones and Behavior

References

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Patrick, Brian C., Hisley, Jennifer & Kempler, Toni (2000) “What's everybody so excited about?": The effects of teacher enthusiasm on student intrinsic motivation and vitality, *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 68:3, 217-236, doi: 10.1080/00220970009600093