


Developing Your Teaching Presence : Creating a Teaching Philosophy

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I seek foremost to create and take advantage of “teachable moments”.

I consider teaching to be the most effective way to learn.


What might these teaching philosophy statements reveal about Teacher/student Roles? Learning goals? Teaching Styles? Core Values?



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Creating a Teaching Philosophy: Developing Your Teaching Presence

- Session Goals: *Getting Pen to Paper*
- Institute Format: *Write Now...Talk & Write Later*
- Produce a Teaching Philosophy “SCAFFOLD”
- Roles, Purposes, Concepts, Methods, Outcomes*




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Beginning A “Basic” *ROLES* Teaching Philosophy

Complete these statements. What verbs, nouns, and adjectives do you use? What might your choices reveal about your teaching methods? Goals? Expectations?

- My students are...
- As a teacher, my students think I am...

Consider how your statements relate.




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What is a Philosophy?

*Inquiry? Search? Pursuit of Wisdom?
Contextual Interpretive Means? Belief?*

- A Rational System of Motivating Concepts or Principles.
- A Basic Theory or Viewpoint
- A System of Values by Which One Lives/Acts




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Let’s Write! *PURPOSES*

Complete the following statement(s):

- The purposes of Teaching are (are to) _____
- I teach because _____

How do your statements relate? Diverge? Why?




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Teacher/Student Interaction

What Do We *Expect* From Students?
What Do Students *Expect* From Us?

Any *Problems*?
What's Causing Them?

How might considering **EXPECTATIONS** help you define *Roles* and *Goals*?




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WRITE: Perceptions of Your *Teaching Self* **CONCEPTS**

What metaphors would you use to describe yourself as a teacher?

- Facilitator?
- Coach?
- Shepherd?
- Leader?
- Dictator?
- *Watering Can?/ Fire hose?*




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Teachers' Perceptions of Themselves (Part II)

How are your **CORE Values** manifest in your teaching? In your relationships with students?

How do you rectify misunderstandings with students?

Can you motivate your students? *De-motivate* them?




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Let's **WRITE!** (AGAIN!) **METHODS**

What **MOST** Concerns You about Teaching? _____

- ⊙ Teaching Effectiveness?
- ⊙ Incivility? Classroom Conflict?
- ⊙ Content Knowledge?
- ⊙ Age? Experience?




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Powerful Principles of Instruction

(Yelon, 1996)

- ⊙ Meaningfulness/Prerequisites (*Context*)
- ⊙ Open Communication (*Relationships*)
- ⊙ Organized, Essential Ideas (*Main Points*)
- ⊙ Learning Aids (*Technology*)
- ⊙ Active Practice (*Applying Information*)
- ⊙ Safe Spaces/Encouraging Places (*Feeling*)
- ⊙ Consistency (*Dependability*)

Do you consider these Principles when designing a course? When Teaching it?




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OUTCOMES

"Wanted: GREAT Students"

You've just landed a \$1.5m grant to teach 30 undergraduates! You have the chance to recruit your class (Oh, you can also take them *anywhere* in the world for a semester.)

How Would You Write a Want Ad for This Opportunity? **50 word limit!**



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Teaching Philosophy Basics: Part I

Three Key Questions We've Begun to Answer:

- ⊙ How do you define teacher/student **Roles**?
- ⊙ What are the **Purposes** of teaching and learning?
- ⊙ **Who are You** as a teacher?
- ⊙ What teaching strategies do you use? Why?



Building on Your Basics Part II

What Issues Do We Address Next?

- ⊙ Teaching and learning **methods**.
- ⊙ Teaching and learning **assessment**.
- ⊙ Using of a "**framing device**"* metaphor or critical incident to ground your statement.
- ⊙ Writing **yourself** into your statement.

*Schonwetter, et al. 2002



Key Teaching Philosophy Issues (cont.)

- ⊙ What are your future Teaching and Learning goals?
- ⊙ How do your teaching and research relate?
- ⊙ Teaching in Different Contexts ("outside" the classroom).
 - Service-learning/Outreach
- ⊙ What role does Diversity play in your teaching?
- ⊙ What was your worst teaching experience? How did you handle it?
- ⊙ What kinds of assessment do you use?



Where Do We Go From Here?





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*Creating a Teaching Philosophy You Can Use: A Working Bibliography*¹ Michigan State University TAP Spring 2009

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¹ What follows are some of the resources (and people) I’ve consulted in putting together this workshop. My sincere thanks go to Dee Fink, University of Oklahoma, for his comments to me about teaching philosophy development and this presentation. I am grateful to Tine Reimers and Bill Roberson, SUNY-Albany, for their willingness to share their teaching statements (Bill remains my favorite teacher of all time. He was my American LIT. TA at UNC.). Thanks also to Jan Allen, Columbia University, for her mentoring and professional development guidance through the years and Laurie Bellows, University of Nebraska, Todd Zakrajcek, Central Michigan University, and Milt Cox, Miami University, and *FASEB* 2008, for giving me opportunities to take this “show” on the road. Finally, my thanks to Ed Nuhfer, California State University Channel Islands, a fellow cyclist, who continues to convince me to keep taking the roads less traveled and to Dan Pratt, who prompts me to look beyond everything I think I know.

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Web Resources

Chronicle of Higher Education. How to Write a Teaching Philosophy Statement.
<http://chronicle.com/jobs/2003/03/2003032702c.htm>

Duquesne University Center for Teaching Excellence. The Statement of Teaching Philosophy. <http://www.cte.duq.edu/resources/factas/eResources/stp.html>

Frequently Asked Questions about the Philosophy of Teaching Statement
<http://www.oic.id.ucsb.edu/TA/port-FAQ.html>

Iowa State University. <http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/philosophy.html>

Michigan State University. Teaching Philosophy Development Workshop Template.
http://tap.msu.edu/nvgt/ancmt/present_temp.htm

Ohio State University Faculty and TA Development. Guidance on Writing a Teaching Philosophy. http://ftad.osu.edu/portfolio/philosophy/Phil_guidance.html

Teaching Style Inventory. <http://longleaf.net/teachingstyle.html>

Teaching Perspectives Inventory. <http://teachingperspectives.com/>

Teaching Goals. <http://www.uiowa.edu/~centeach/tgi/>

University of Central Florida. Teaching Philosophies.
<http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/tresources/philosophies.htm>

UC-Santa Barbara. <http://www.oic.id.ucsb.edu/Resources/Teaching/TPS.html>

University of Hawaii. TiPPS for Philosophy of Teaching Statements.
<http://www.lll.hawaii.edu/sltcc/tipps/philosophy.html>

University of Michigan. Teaching Strategies: The Teaching Philosophy/Teaching Statement. <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/tstpts.html>

University of Minnesota.
<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/philosophy/index.html>

Washington University Saint Louis. <http://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/writing-teaching-philosophy-statement>



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“Creating a Teaching Philosophy You Can Use: *Reading Others’ Statements*”

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TAP Workshop Spring 2010

(NOTE: We often look to examples when starting a new process; however, we want our philosophy to reflect who we are individually. When consulting others’ teaching philosophies for guidance ask yourself, “**What are the reasons supporting the decisions this author makes?**” Understanding their motivations, paragraph by paragraph, will help you to construct a framework for your own prose – one more suited to you and one ultimately more accurately descriptive of your *teaching self*.)

A. Definition: Paraphrasing Webster’s, a *philosophy* is a theory underlying a sphere of activity or thought. When we consider what makes up our *teaching philosophies* then, we are trying to identify and define theoretical bases that shape our pedagogical practice.

B. Formative Questions: Questions you should address when creating your philosophy. (Many of these relate thematically):

1. Why do you teach?
2. What is motivating about your subject?
3. What is good teaching?
4. For those teaching within applied learning contexts, i.e. Music, Languages, etc., how does working with students individually differ from teaching a class?
5. How is Office Hours teaching different from classroom experience?
6. Under what conditions do our students best learn?
7. How do you assess student learning?
8. What are we, as teachers, trying to accomplish?
9. How are my approaches to teaching a reflection of *who* I think I am? Who I think *my students* are?
10. What role does teaching play vis-a-vis my other professional responsibilities?
11. How do your teaching and research intersect?
12. What are the most important roles of the Academy?
13. What roles do Ethics play in your teaching? In other aspects of your professional life?
14. How do you consider (and implement) Diversity in your teaching and curriculum development?
15. What goals and objectives do you set for your students? (What if you don’t reach them?)

C. Comments and Questions: reoccurring queries/concerns from academics in the process of writing their statements:

Concerning Teaching Roles:

- “Philosophies should somehow describe who you think you are as teachers.”
- “What’s your role in the subject?” “As a teacher?” “(Is this a) personal *mission statement*?”
- “What are your values?” “How do you see people?” “As inherently good?” “What are your underlying assumptions?” “What general approach to life do you take to your teaching?” “How are my core values reflected in my teaching?”
- “(Teaching) Philosophies are shaped by (these kinds of) fundamental questions.”

Concerning Implementation:

- How do we translate philosophy into practice?
- “Implementation is a key problem to consider when writing philosophies.” “I’m writing one now as part of my teaching portfolio. I’m secure in what I’ll say, but not how I’ll do it.”
- “What’s the difference between teaching big and small classes?” “(Is) The teaching philosophy similar?”
- “What of distance learning” “Is there a philosophy for this?”
- “What philosophies of basic knowledge should you use?”

D. Other Reflective Points: Most authors I have read organized their philosophies around the following themes/ideas/approaches. Their statements included answers to (or some evidence of thought concerning) the following:

1. *Why* am I writing this statement? *What are my goals?*
2. Reflective statements on teaching, including authors’ opinions on learning and descriptions of the conditions in which students best learn.
3. Descriptions of effective course design, reflecting consideration of *what environments might produce the best learning*.
4. *What constitutes effective class organization? Effective teaching methodologies?*
5. Creating positive learning environments. Establishing larger learning goals and the means to reach them, and planning to allow for change if necessary.
6. A description of the author as teacher. “*What roles* do teachers assume?”
7. (In some cases) Descriptions of *students as teachers*, relying on the strength of peer relationships to foster higher learning.
8. Inclusion of examples that worked best to illustrate the authors’ approach.
9. Examples of evaluative techniques that *reveal effective measures of ongoing assessment and personal reflection*.
10. *Philosophical justification* for an author’s approach to teaching.

As I recommended earlier in this piece, when reading others’ philosophies, establish first their prime motivation behind their ideas on the page. Doing this will give you a template upon which you can begin to create your own eloquent prose, which I hope will eventually become a lifetime dialogue with yourself about who you think you are professionally. Remember, teaching philosophies are works in progress.