

Teaching Philosophy  
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I define learning, in a lecture setting, as gaining an understanding of basic concepts, how these concepts work in the larger world, and being able to apply these concepts. Since I am an entomologist by training, I believe that a laboratory class concurrent with the lecture is critical to facilitate this type of learning. I hope that students taking my class will come to appreciate that learning is a life-long process.

As a teacher, I see myself as a guide. The students will get as much out of my classes as the effort they are willing to put into them. I will point out what I consider to be the relevant concepts, encourage questions, and make myself available via office hours and checking my e-mail several times a day. However, it is up to the student to seek help if they need it. For example, in the lab I taught as a teaching assistant, I provided relevant material, encouraged questions during the lab time, and made myself available to them outside of the laboratory time. I will also help my students to improve skills they have already begun to learn and begin to teach them new skills. In laboratory settings, these will vary depending on the specific class, but group work will be a skill common to all labs. In the lecture arena, presentation and writing skills will be emphasized. I will seek to help my students by providing positive feedback on what they already do well as well as constructive comments on areas to improve.

Along with an understanding of the basic materials, I want my students to improve their critical thinking skills and be able to apply the basic concepts and laboratory exercises to real world experiences and examples. I want my students to realize that public speaking and writing are skills that can be honed and not natural born talents that you do or do not possess. Exposure to primary literature is an important part of scientific writing. Undergraduates will begin to learn research skills that take them far beyond the internet. I am willing to start at this level with graduate students who did not begin this process in their undergraduate education, also. Lab groups in the laboratory classes will facilitate the development and improvement of the skills involved in working together as well as the practical aspect of reducing the cost of supplies.

I plan to use a variety of techniques and assignments to facilitate these goals. My lectures will be power-point based with the slides available to students. I will create class

websites for the posting of the lectures, homework and laboratory assignments, extra material, and study aids. There will be a policy of “there are no stupid questions” in my classroom. My lectures will include real-world examples and discussion. Homework will be given to help familiarize students with material. Quizzes will be scheduled and include multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer sections. Exams will be similar in format and also include essays.

All of my students will be required to give a class presentation. For undergraduate students, these will be brief and I will provide a list of topics, specific guidelines, and help along the way. Graduate students will have more freedom in their topic selection and format. I will strongly encourage those students who have not presented before to send their power-point files to me for review. All students will be welcome to do so, but they do not have to. I will also provide information on presentation skills and common mistakes to avoid. To encourage critical thinking and teach evaluation skills, each student will evaluate at least one student who presents each day. These evaluations will include positive feedback as well as constructive suggestions for improvement.

Some kind of written project will be another component of my classes. This could be a research proposal, a review of a topic, or a write up of a research project. Primary literature will be emphasized and the number of internet sources limited to two or three.

Lab reports will be required, also. Groups will consist of no more than four students. Undergraduate students will be assigned groups. Graduate students will have the freedom to form their own groups. Groups will perform the experiments together but turn in individual reports. These reports will begin to teach students how to write journal articles. They will include several questions about the results of the experiment that the students must address.

In terms of grading, I will not curve. Grades in my classes will be based on the above mentioned class components. No one component will be worth more than 30% of the final grade. Homework, quizzes, and exams will be structured to emphasize understanding of basic concepts and application of those concepts. Partial credit will be given for short answer and essay questions. For example, on a laboratory practical exam I administered, students got most of the credit for calculating an economic injury level if they set up the problem correctly but messed up the math. Exams will include a few

bonus questions. In lab reports, the student's reasoning behind why an experiment did not work as expected is much more important than the fact that the experiment did not work. I will allow homework and lab reports to be turned in late, but points will be lost for each day the assignment is late. The content of class presentations and written reports will be emphasized in my grading. I will correct improper grammar and spelling in written assignments and give suggestions for improvement of public speaking skills, but such errors will not impact the student's grade unless they are extreme. For example, I will count the number of filler words (um, uh, em, er, etc.) that students use in their presentation. If they accumulate more than 20 filler words in a 15 min presentation (30 for first time presenters and non-native English speakers), they will lose a few points. Several extra credit assignments will be given throughout the semester in an attempt to avoid a student getting, for example, an 89.5. If this does occur, attendance and participation will be used to decide whether the student's grade gets bumped up to the next letter or not.

I will not take an official attendance, but frequent absences from lectures will be noted. Quizzes and exams can only be made up if the student lets me know in advance that they have a conference or other acceptable conflict or if they bring proof of a valid excuse for being absent (doctor's note, funeral announcement, etc.) Laboratory activities cannot be made up. However, a student will be allowed to get the data from their group so they can write the lab report. This will be the student's responsibility. Cell phones ringing (vibrating is ok) in my classroom will not be tolerated.

The bulk of my teaching philosophy is based on my experience as a student rather than as a teacher. As a graduate student on a research assistantship and then on a research fellowship, my teaching experience is limited. To grow as a teacher, I plan to try many things and learn from my successes and failures. I will take the student evaluations seriously. I will pay particular attention to areas of both success and improvement noted by several students.