

TEACHING STATEMENT

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As the subject is full of questions and short on definitive answers, teaching philosophy best departs in issues students genuinely find baffling. I firmly believe the priority of issues to be discussed in my class must be motivated by what students worry about themselves rather than advanced experts. As a teacher in ethics I see my role to inspire students to systematically pursue their own sources of puzzlements, to offer guidance where needed yet without imposing my own agenda of questions. I do believe in tight organization and direction of philosophy courses, where I insist the reading assignments must be read, primarily by utilizing regular quizzes or comments about the present assignments. However, the sole purpose of this regimentation is to focus students in their own pursuit of philosophical problems. I see teaching philosophy as a balancing act between openness in questions and order in the systematic search for answers. The ultimate criterion of success, though, is whether students shall be able to push their own dialectic of back and forth a few steps further. I firmly believe each and every student comes with his or her own set of philosophical questions. The course in philosophy should afford the rare opportunity to deepen students' involvement with them.

Ensuring students feel well supported in my classes is a top priority for me. For all my courses, I offer ample opportunities for my students to speak with me on a regular basis, offering extensive, even daily office hours in addition to online office hours. Regarding writing assignments, I seek to meet with each student individually to discuss their paper-plans. I dedicate ample time before each writing assignment informing students precisely what I expect. To provide additional support, I implement various online teaching tools (such as Sakai or Blackboard) into my course, regularly posting helpful audio-and-visual material. I also am a firm believer in clarity and precision in grading standards. I specify how students' grades are determined by relying on a precise point system, usually adding up to a maximum of 100 points, corresponding nicely to the final grade, having each assignment feed into the total number along a specific tally. Students have consistently found the system exceptionally fair and transparent.

Given my generalist background I feel well suited to meet my students various learning styles and questions. My graduate work at three rather different places has taught me to appreciate different ways of framing and teaching philosophical issues: first at Tübingen University, Germany, where a high premium was placed on historical accuracy in the interpretation of great philosophers, then at Washington University where an empirically informed access to the most contemporary set of issues was valued, and finally at Rice University, where I was trained in a wide range of moral issues. I feel confident in my ability to teach a wide range of courses: in ethics and social & political philosophy. Both of a historical and systematic nature, and both dedicated to providing an overview and to the introduction into a particular problematic. Additionally, I would thoroughly enjoy teaching courses in history of philosophy, particularly from Descartes to Kant, and analytic philosophy, as well as in philosophy of mind and logic, introductory and advanced. I am quite open to widen my range even further, and adapt to the particular teaching needs that might arise. I love philosophy as a whole, and on occasion regret that I am unable to pursue all aspects of it. Still, I am greatly excited about branching out and learning more myself – including how to perfect my teaching – in a sense I consider myself another, only slightly older, student.