

Statement of Teaching Philosophy
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"And further, if from poverty he's not even able to provide himself with tools or anything else for his art, he'll produce shoddier works, and he'll make worse craftsmen of his sons or any others he teaches."

– Plato, *Republic* 421e

Increasing enlightenment exposes the effects of inequality and poverty for the individual, community, nation, and globe. Often, the focus of this enlightenment concerns material inequality. Indeed, dating back to at least the Greeks, we have known the poverty prevents us from having access to the tools to produce the works necessary for a good life. While material inequality is an important issue, it can mask another form of inequality that prevents the good life – intellectual poverty. The philosophy of guiding my students to escape their intellectual poverty directs my efforts within and outside the classroom. By mentoring students to think for themselves, I invite students to develop the skills to live an examined life. Through helping students escape their intellectual poverty, I also assist them in developing the techniques to secure their material needs.

My teaching philosophy is *I teach ideas I have examined for myself, explore ideas I have examined but do not fully understand with eager students, and willingly admit my ignorance on topics I have yet to examine.* How this teaching philosophy manifests itself within the classroom depends on the students. It is wrong for an expert in husbandry to teach a novice the well-developed trades of the craft. If an expert teaches the knowledge she has acquired over years of development to the novice, the novice becomes overwhelmed, frustrated, and is likely to learn nothing. It is also incorrect, however, for an expert to treat an apprentice like a novice. The apprentice will become bored, frustrated, and is likely to see the expert as ignorant. Furthermore, it is wrong for an expert to pretend that she has absolute knowledge of her art, as both the novice and apprentice will be able to see the expert cares more about her ego than investigating her craft. Thus, I teach introductory, upper-level, and graduate courses in different manners.

When I teach introductory political science courses, I strive to introduce my students to questions of justice and what it means to be a competent citizen. By inviting my students to think seriously about the good life and citizenship, I embrace the ideals of Horace Mann's 1842 speech "Go Forth and Teach," which charges American public education to make people, "sober-minded, enlightened, studious of right, capable of comparing and balancing opposite interpretations of a fundamental law, or opposite views of a particular system of policy." I achieve this goal by making the concepts of the course tangible. Through active-learning strategies, simulations, case study analyses, applying concepts of the class to contemporary political events, and real-world writing assignments, my introductory courses offer students the ability to experience ideas and see how they exist within the world around them. These classes invite students to use observation and reason to see how the scientific study of politics can shed light on our political opinions.

In upper-level course work, I focus on developing my students' ability for critical thinking. My main goal is to be a mentor for students as they learn how to think for themselves using both ancient and modern investigation methods. In quantitative coursework, I have assignments, activities, simulations, and experiences that develop my students' ability to engage with the modern scientific method. Students can extrapolate the critical parts of empirical research and engage with data to investigate research questions. In theoretical coursework, I design the course to cultivate students' empirical and logical investigation of political opinions and ideas. We begin by unearthing our opinions on a question, topic, or policy. We then turn to philosophic works to see how others have investigated these areas. This allows us to have a conversation not only with those in the room but to learn from those that have given serious attention to these matters.

Finally, in graduate-level course work, I collaborate and engage with my students as a fellow producer of knowledge. My main goal is to mentor graduate students as they begin their academic careers. By developing courses that engage these students as a peer, I provide graduate students opportunities to experience and understand the norms, expectations, and challenges of academic life. For example, in courses with undergraduate and graduate students within the same classroom, I have graduate students teach a class session. I mentor these junior colleagues as they develop their class session and reflect with them upon completing their work. This experience allows us to improve as educators, as we work together to discover what methods, ideas, and rhetoric are effective forms of escaping intellectual poverty.