

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

My approach to teaching is guided by three main principles, developed from my experiences as both a learner and instructor, and through continual engagement in the scholarship of teaching. I use a constantly evolving set of methods and techniques designed to motivate, engage, and support learners, and tailor my teaching to different learners through continual interaction and feedback.

### 1. Guiding Principles

#### *Personal Engagement and Leadership by Example: Building a Student-Focused Learning Team*

My enthusiasm and passion for the natural world was fostered throughout my high school and undergraduate career by dedicated teachers who shared this enthusiasm, and allowed it to permeate their learning activities. I try to lead by example, by actively working to motivate students to become excited about their chosen discipline, and by providing a supportive atmosphere where they may feel at home among others who share their excitement – including me! I strive to demonstrate my commitment to my students' success through extensive preparation combined with flexibility, high quality materials and learner-centered activities, and by establishing a team-oriented relationship with my students and other instructors. My goal here is to create an environment in which my students and I, as a 'learning team', work to achieve a set of common goals. I aim to convince my learners that I have as much to learn from them and from our interactions as they may have to learn from me, and that our time together is analogous to a journey through our subject matter.

#### *Effective Learning and Communication Skills: Taking an Active Approach*

The ability to think critically and communicate clearly is crucial to success in any field of study or professional occupation. I believe that aspiring learners must acquire these skills as early as possible in their careers and must continue to hone them throughout life. I actively model these skills in the classroom, and ensure that all elements of course work include a variety of means for learners to practice them, both with me and with their peers. I firmly believe that students learn best by asking questions. I encourage inquiry and independent thought, pushing students to explore resources available to them and to think critically about problems encountered. I prefer to teach by helping students find the path to the correct answer or most appropriate hypothesis, rather than simply providing these without requiring students to work for them. This can be accomplished in many ways, from simply asking students to explain confusing topics to me or their peers, to requiring students to complete assignments, group case-study activities, and capstone projects that extend the scope of the course beyond what is taught in class, demonstrating real-world applications of concepts and ideas.

#### *Support and Respect: We Are All Working Together*

I enjoy working with students different in situations, where I can convey my enthusiasm for the material and my genuine commitment to their success while allowing them space to grow. I strive to be approachable and available to students as instructor and mentor, during and outside of scheduled class time, both to assist them with coursework and to provide guidance and encouragement in their professional endeavors. I treat students with respect, as colleagues, helping them to feel like active participants in the learning process and encouraging them to take personal ownership of the outcome of their undergraduate education. I believe that regular evaluation and prompt feedback throughout the term are extremely important for student

progress, as are fair and transparent examinations and evaluations. Further, I think it is important for students to have a forum in which to evaluate their instructor and provide feedback during the course of the term, in order for the instructor to ensure that the course is being delivered in a fashion that optimizes student involvement and learning potential. Students have a variety of learning styles, and such evaluations allow me to attempt to tailor courses 'on the fly' in such a way that all students are accommodated and positioned to succeed.