

Stating Your Teaching Philosophy

Prof. Danielle Mihram

**Center for Excellence in Teaching; and,
Department of French and Italian**

Prof. Lawford Anderson

Department of Earth Sciences

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Stating Your Teaching Philosophy Outline of Workshop

- **The Statement of Teaching Philosophy**
 - Purpose
 - Content (Key components)
 - Issues to consider
- **Overview of Key Points in Supplementary Readings**
 - Key questions to ask of yourself in writing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy
 - Key questions others will ask in reviewing and interpreting yours
 - Suggestions for possible topics to include
 - Example Teaching Philosophy Statements
- **Discussion of Examples**
 - From Teaching Philosophy Statements prepared by USC TAs
 - Disciplinary preferences

Enlarged edition of *Stating Your Teaching Philosophy* by Heather James and Armand R. Tanguay, January 30, 2004.

Questions to Help You Frame Your Statement

- Does your approach to teaching and learning demonstrate **reflective thinking** and **careful planning** or flexibility when appropriate?
- How does your statement articulate **openness to different perspectives**? And how will you demonstrate this?
- Does your statement show awareness of **disciplinary conventions/expectations**?

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Purpose

- **Key Component of a Teaching Portfolio**
 - Provides a natural organization scheme for the teaching portfolio
 - In large part determines the content of the teaching portfolio
 - Support for key statements
- **Key to Establishment of Individual Teaching Goals and Objectives**
 - Opportunity to focus on those aspects of teaching that you value most highly
 - Opportunity to showcase reflective thinking about teaching and learning
 - Opportunity to develop your own individual set of teaching approaches and skills
- **Required Document for Employment, Promotion, Awards**
 - A living document evolving over time

Statement of Teaching Philosophy Content. I

- **Who** are you, as a teacher, and who do you want your students to become?
- **What** are :
 - Your goals, objectives, values, interests?
 - Your approaches to teaching and learning?
 - Your assessments of student' learning outcomes?
 - The environments that you create that are favorable to learning?
- **When** have you accomplished key teaching activities?
- **Where** have you been influenced, and from where have you learned valuable lessons?
 - Special teachers, significant quotes, unusual classes
- **Why** do you want to teach in the first place?
- **How** do you propose to grow as a first-rate teacher/educator?

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Content. II

- **Order of key components**
 - **Goals and objectives (values)**
 - Personal goals as a teacher
 - Goals for your students
 - **Teaching methods and approaches**
 - Unique to you, reflect fundamental values
 - Specific to your discipline
 - **Methods of assessment**
 - Self, student
 - **Path to Improvement**
 - **New Ideas**
 - Vehicle for trying them out

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. I

- **A Teaching Philosophy Statement need not be comprehensive**
 - **But it had better be interesting!**
- **What is the purpose of any education?**
 - **Purpose/value of a teacher in the process**
- **Something special that you have been taught by one of your own best teachers**
 - **Or even worst!**
- **Something special that you have learned from your own teaching experience**
 - **An unforgettable lesson**

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. II

- **Fundamental values**

- Creativity
- Inventiveness
- Reflective thinking
- Analytical skills
- Breadth of knowledge
- Depth of knowledge in **one or more specific areas**
- Individual achievement
- Ability to collaborate and **work in groups effectively**
- Challenge (**personal growth, ability to overcome**)
- Knowledge
- Independence of thought and action
- Leadership
- Decision making ability
- Cultural sensitivity

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. III

Unique Teaching Methods and Approaches (Examples)

Teaching the Humanities

- **Teacher as student: an ongoing discovery**
 - **Heraclitean nature of the humanities** (Heraclitus 500 B.C. Early Greek philosopher who maintained that strife and change are the natural conditions of the universe.)
- **Development of creativity**
- **Mixing methods of inquiry and reasoning**
 - Rational inquiry
 - Critical thinking
 - Reflective thinking
 - Textual analysis or interpretation?
 - Educating the emerging "world citizen"
 - Critical (socratic) self-examination,
 - Moral reasoning (Harvard requirement)

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. IV

- **An Array of Teaching Methods in the Humanities**
 - To lecture or not to lecture?
 - Questions of style vs. content (importance of rubrics, providing guidelines and structure)
 - Cooperative (group) Learning
 - Experiential Learning
 - Role of discussions
 - Effective questioning techniques
 - The impact of the audio and visual (multi-media)

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. V

Teaching Science - Methods and Approaches

- **Scientific method vs. the scientific approach**
 - **Well-formulated problems**
 - **Concept of the multiple working hypothesis**
- **Art of scientific presentation**
 - **Separating observation (data) from hypothesis**
- **Incorporation of design problems - plan for change**
- **Ability to deal with ambiguity - the quality of data**
- **Development of creativity - the challenge of the researcher**
- **Development of leadership skills**
 - **Collaboration and team building**

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. VI

- **Intimate coupling of Teaching and Research**
 - Teaching research skills - keeping an open view
 - Researching teaching methods - the value of “hands-on” approaches
 - Laboratory experiences - the personal discovery of new findings
 - Critical literature searches
 - The foundation of new discoveries
- **Unique Subject Matter - relating the abstract to the common experience**
 - *e.g.*, Geol 215 (Petrology) - Minerals that Matter
 - Depth-temperature-time history of the Earth’s crust
 - *e.g.*, Geol 108 (Crises of the Planet)
 - Systems perspective - the growth of interdisciplinary research
 - Global warming - a model problem?
 - Earthquake prediction - how real is when?
 - Natural disasters (landslide, floods, earthquakes) - a time perspective

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. VII

- **Interdisciplinary Teaching**
 - Shows academic breadth
 - Major goal of many universities and colleges in 2004
- **Collaborative (Team) Teaching**
 - Cooperative nature; differences I perspective
- **Emphasis Matched to the Institution**
 - Research universities
 - Departmental, disciplinary differences
 - Universities
 - Selective colleges
 - Liberal arts colleges (scientists, mathematicians)

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Issues to Consider. VIII

- **There is no one formula**
 - Literally thousands of variants
 - Many degrees of freedom
- **This is *your* teaching philosophy**
 - Not anyone elses!
- **The Key to Success**
 - Write what you believe
 - Follow the consequences!

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