Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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In the past, I composed teaching philosophy statements that contained a plethora of academic terms and discussed Boyer's Model of Scholarship. That all looks nice on paper, perhaps, but in practice my teaching philosophy is much simpler and centers around five core values: preparation, diversity, fun, accountability, and critical thinking. I realize these five core values do not form a witty acronym. They are neither alliterative nor parallel in form, but they work well for me and my students.

My teaching philosophy centers around five core values: preparation, diversity, fun, accountability, and critical thinking. First, effective teaching begins with preparation. Few things frustrated me more when I was a student than to have a professor walk into class and simply read lecture notes. My class time is devoted to facilitating dynamic and engaging presentations and discussions. Second, my teaching affirms diversity. On one level, I value diversity in my course assignments and delivery options; on another and more important level, I value diversity as a quality of life (e.g., race, gender, age, religion, physical ability, etc.). A primary teaching goal is to impress upon my students their need to recognize, understand, and appreciate diversity in its many forms.

Third, I believe that good teaching should be enjoyable for both the instructor and the student. Using humor and creating enjoyable experiences relaxes students and makes them more receptive, especially when they have anxiety over a particular assignment. Fourth, my teaching stresses accountability. Although I like to enjoy my classes, I also have high academic standards and expectations.   I communicate clear expectations and consistently evaluate performance based on them. I have strict attendance and grading policies but recognize the need to be flexible in extenuating circumstances.

As it relates to the first three core values, technology plays an integral role. Part of my preparation involves making connections to course content and communication technologies that students utilize and that the job market requires. A few examples of this are that in online courses, I often require students to work in pairs or groups through Skype, and I have often used a Skype job interview as a course assignment. In my public speaking courses, I require students to video record an in-class presentation and upload it to YouTube. In interpersonal communication courses, I require students to create skits to illustrate interpersonal communication theories or principles and upload them to YouTube.

In one course I teach, I require students to maintain an online blog that includes text, video and other multimedia elements. In some classes I require students to create a Linkedin business profile and create and upload a video resume to it. In writing courses, I often have students work through cloud drives, such as Google Drive, to create and edit shared documents. Technology also helps me showcase diversity and bring entertainment into the room through the images and videos that I share through various social media platforms, websites, music clips and PowerPoint presentations. All of my courses also utilize a learning management system to deliver course content and serve as a central communication hub for the course. I have used WebCT, Blackboard, e-College, Canvas and Moodle.

Finally, critical thinking is highest goal of my teaching. In an age of rising populism and "fake news," this core value of my teaching philosophy is, well, critical. I tell students that I believe my number one job is to help them cultivate critical thinking skills. If I can teach students how to think independently and critically, then they will realize the fallacy of some of their beliefs. They will find some of the answers they need and begin to explore the questions that they previously had not contemplated, and I will get evaluations that read, "He is not the easiest, but he is the best," by those students who come to realize the value of my teaching philosophy put into practice.