Statement of Teaching Philosophy
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Each student, upon completion of a course, should possess a toolbox filled with tools crafted specially for them. That is a teacher's job.

I have taught in a variety of classroom settings, including hybrid community college classes and online graduate classes. Throughout these experiences, I have gleaned the necessity of flexibility in my teaching to maintain focus on the students. Students learn in different ways, so curriculum should vary depending on students' levels of expertise related to a given course, and their interests in it. I embrace differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2000) as my main pedagogical approach which allows me to attain students' needs and help them meet and exceed established standards. As an educational technologist, I utilize emerging technologies to support this approach.

My approach to teaching undergraduate level classes may differ from those of graduate level courses, and I utilize different strategies when teaching large as opposed to small classes. Although I strongly favor facilitating, there may be a time for direct instruction. In any classroom setting, I am receptive to challenges that students may be experiencing and devise ways to adapt to those challenges.

When teaching my first undergraduate course, introductory probability and statistics, in New York City, I found a classroom with several marginally-interested students and thought that I was the sole cause. I learned, however, that because the course was required for a range of programs, many had no intrinsic reason to be in the class. Teaching this class shaped the first step in my teaching philosophy: maintain students' attention and motivate them. I utilized several pedagogical approaches including game based learning to gain students' interest and introduce them to concepts. That interest was sustained and nurtured by relating course topics to their everyday lives. Making connections between students' experiences and the subject matter helps students to learn by building upon their mental models.

On the other hand, graduate students can often self-select many of their courses and take classes in their areas of interest. In graduate courses, however, students frequently need support to identify specific questions they may want to answer throughout the semester. When teaching MSTU 5510, I had students select a virtual world related to their interests in the beginning of the class. Students, then, experienced course topics within that space and conducted a research study as their final project related to that virtual world. I encouraged students' authentic production as class assignments. Many of these projects resulted in paper proposals for conferences or evolved to be master's theses.

At its core, my teaching is inspired by my research, which focuses on affordances of new learning environments to foster students' sustained motivation, engagement and learning. Thus, I teach by designing learning activities with the goal of making the classroom a meaningful and engaging environment where students can freely explore their interests within the frame of the course. I use the principles of Self-Determination Theory (autonomy, competence and relatedness, as discussed below) when designing classroom activities to maximize student motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Identical assignments will not have the same success rates. I provide students with various choices in their assignments and readings to scaffold their learning. This facilitates their learning, metacognitive skills and fosters *autonomy satisfaction*. I also make sure that students gain confidence as they acquire expertise in course topics, through giving presentations, leading

discussions, and completing assignments. I strive to gauge my students' level of expertise related to a given topic and tailor assignments for students to bolster their *competence satisfaction*. In addition, I provide customized feedback to students. For example, when I was teaching undergraduate level mathematics, I held different office hours for students of varying proficiency.

I put *relatedness satisfaction* into practice by turning the classroom into a learning community. I try to establish this community through group work, student led discussions, and peer reviews both in the physical classroom and in course management systems like Blackboard, Moodle and ClassWeb. I also foster students' relatedness satisfaction through communication which is the single most important aspect in a classroom. The classroom climate has to promote fairness and respect for all students. My aim is for students to see me as someone who cares about their learning and someone who they can trust. This creates a comfortable environment where students are not afraid to ask questions.

My classes have received very positive student evaluations. One evaluation commented, "She was really great at helping us to find information and examples relevant to the topics that we found interesting. She has been an invaluable resource and she has allowed us to each explore different things according to our own interests while still teaching us all the basics of the topics." During AC230 in York College, students demonstrated great interest in the different technologies and the cases that apply these technologies for educational purposes. Several students maintained contact with me long after classes were over.

I have been involved in project teams where my professors generally used a cognitive apprenticeship model. When a new graduate student joins the team, senior students teach them the basics of being in a research team. As they gain expertise, they are given more complex research responsibilities. This model works well to give students an early sense of the holistic picture of a research project, while helping them understand the importance of attending to details in research project tasks. Due to its effectiveness, I plan on integrating it with teaching my graduate students.

Students are the center of instruction in any classroom, physical or virtual. My role is not to fill their minds with information, but to provide information in ways that encourage them to take responsibility for their learning, inspire courage to grow intellectually, cultivate their curiosity, and provide opportunities for developing relationships within the learning community. The father of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, said, "To be a teacher, you must be a lifelong student." By careful planning and implementation, on-going student evaluation and creating a student-centered positive learning atmosphere, I help students become life-long learners and critical thinkers. I will continue to adapt, react and invent new strategies to help my students in their personal learning adventures.

References

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Tomlinson, C. A. (2000). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners.* Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.