



Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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PURDUE

WRITING LAB

Overview & Purpose

What is a Teaching Philosophy?

- At its core, a teaching philosophy statement (sometimes simply called a teaching statement) is a brief, personal statement that offers insight into an instructor's beliefs about teaching and actions in the classroom.
- In essence, it is the “why, what, and how” of one's teaching. It is often included as part of a more comprehensive teaching portfolio, but can also stand alone as a singular document.

What is the purpose of a teaching philosophy?

- Nancy Chism (1998) writes, “What brings a teaching philosophy to life is the extent to which it creates a vivid portrait of how a person is intentional about teaching practices and committed to career.”
- The teaching statement is essentially intended to help others visualize who you are as a teacher; it stands to reason that this is the main purpose for its inclusion in job applications and tenure dossiers as well as applications for teaching awards or fellowships.

Content

What is included in a teaching philosophy?

- ☐ Conceptualization of learning
- ☐ Conceptualization of teaching
- ☐ Goals for students
- ☐ Implementation of the philosophy
- ☐ Evaluation or assessment of goals
- ☐ A Nod to inclusive learning

What is included in a teaching philosophy?

- **Conceptualization of learning.**

- You might consider addressing what learning means to you, or how you think learning happens.
- You might reflect on your own experiences in the classroom, or in particular situations, to help you clarify and articulate this conceptualization.
- Perhaps the easiest way to approach this task is to think about how you would complete the following sentence: I believe students learn best by/when/who...

What is included in a teaching philosophy? (Cont.)

- **Conceptualization of teaching.**
 - You might also want to address how you conceptualize teaching – what do you think it means “to teach,” and how you believe you facilitate the learning process as a “teacher.”
 - To help you determine your view on teaching, you might finish the statement, “I believe the role of the teacher is...”
 - This could be metaphorical, or you might reflect on what you believe an instructor’s responsibility is towards his or her students in terms of motivation, content, support, etc.

What is included in a teaching philosophy? (Cont.)

- **Goals for students.**

- Addressing your goals for your students is perhaps one of the most important components you can include in your teaching statement, because they are tangible ideas that can communicate a great deal about what is important to you as a teacher.
- Think about what skills or knowledge do you want your students to gain from your class?
- The goals you choose to address can be more than simply learning a given course content or discipline-specific knowledge; you can discuss other skills as well, such as general process or cross-disciplinary skills, or even lifelong learning goals such as critical thinking, problem solving, ethics, social commitment, or self-confidence.
- Equally important when discussing your goals is to discuss why you maintain these goals and how you work to help your students to accomplish those goals.

What is included in a teaching philosophy? (Cont.)

- **Implementation of the philosophy.**
 - Include a description of how one's beliefs about teaching are translated into action.
 - Without showing your philosophy in action or details of how you translate that philosophy into classroom activities, your statements could be perceived as empty.
 - It is worth keeping in mind that the details and examples you provide are what will create that “vivid picture” of your teaching for those who don't know you, and should provide insight into what happens in your classroom on a day-to-day basis rather than flashy, one-time activities that are interesting but not truly representative of your daily teaching.

What is included in a teaching philosophy? (Cont.)

- **Evaluation or assessment of goals.**
 - A discussion of assessment in teaching statements helps show alignment with goals and teaching methods.
 - Ultimately, you simply need to address how you know students are meeting the goals that you set forth.
 - You could discuss both formal and informal assessment methods, such as how you design tests or why you assign certain essays, or even ungraded, in-class activities, etc.

What is included in a teaching philosophy? (Cont.)

- **Inclusive learning.**
 - Mentioning your efforts toward creating an inclusive learning environment or accounting for diversity in the classroom demonstrates a sense of student-centeredness; this describes you as an instructor that is attuned to differences in student ability, learning styles, or level.
 - To accomplish this, you might consider the different ways you might teach majors vs. non-majors, traditional vs. non-traditional students, or even introverts and extroverts -- to name a few.

Guidelines

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General Suggestions:

- Ground it in your discipline, but use language that can be broadly appreciated.
- Make sure it is well written.
- “Own” your statements (i.e., avoid writing about what “all teachers should do”).

Do's:

- Use present tense (e.g., “I”).
- Keep it brief (one to two pages is the generally accepted length).
- Know your audience.

Don'ts:

- Do not make empty statements (i.e., avoid overusing buzzwords)
- Do not rehash your vita.
- Do not be condescending towards your students.

If you need more help...
Come visit us at the Writing Lab!

Heavilon Hall Room 226

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<https://owl.purdue.edu/writinglab>

Schedule appointments using
the online schedule system.

