

Statement of Teaching Philosophy for Anthony J. DeMattee

As I expressed in my letter, research is fun but I also genuinely enjoy teaching. I think it is a noble task and I find it rewarding when it is done well. Although I am still new to the trade, my course evaluations suggest excellent performance as an early-career instructor and show I consistently outscore the average O'Neill School and Indiana University professor in questions assessing teaching effectiveness. And with respect to time-management, I believe I have balanced teaching, research, and a healthy lifestyle better than most of my peers in the program. These are all positive trends that I hope to continue as an assistant professor.

Three principles comprise my teaching philosophy: transparency, flexibility, and accountability. To achieve *transparency*, I involve students in my class in a way that allows them to see why I choose to do certain things. Two examples are my use of clear grading rubrics and explaining how course deliverables contribute to desired learning outcomes. Another is the mid-term course evaluation I conducted as a first-time teacher. Of course, many instructors ask students to provide feedback to improve their teaching quality. But my approach is markedly different. In consultation with the Indiana University's Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL), I used the TopHat classroom education software to collect anonymous student responses for the entire class to see in real time. Doing the evaluation transparently was a risky strategy because students can be vicious in course evaluations. Indeed, my mid-term course evaluation's originality impressed even the pedagogical experts at CITL. But the exercise worked. Positive comments such as "I think you need to keep doing exactly what you're doing, its crazy to me that this is your first year teaching because you do your job very well. You're definitely one of the better professors I have had since coming to IU," and "you find very creative ways to explain things, like the game, and I enjoy that innovative way if teaching!" were valuable nuggets of encouragement (typos in original). Students were not afraid to critique, either, and I was able to adjust my teaching strategy after reading anonymous comments such as, "*If you can, take more time to unpack some of the tough topics/ideas in class. Sometimes I need more explanation or more time to process big ideas. Also, when you ask questions, try to make them more concise or ask big questions in smaller parts. This could help increase class participation,*" and "*i enjoy your lecture style, and dont find [small, spontaneous] group work productive*" (typos in original). For the class, students saw how their individual opinion of my teaching compared to their peers. Aggregated responses revealed just how difficult it is for an educator to please a wide range of preferences. Not only did the exercise allow me to improve my teaching, but I believe the transparent manner in which I collected and shared the information established a bond of trust between the students and myself.

Flexibility is the second principle of my teaching philosophy. I choose to avoid excessive rigidity to provide a more valuable educational experience. First, I develop my assignments so that students apply essential concepts and achieve the desired learning outcome. Of course, these assignments imperfectly fit all students' interests or strengths, and thus I happily grant flexibility for students to propose an alternate project that achieves the specified learning outcome. These proposals are decided on a case by case basis. Next, because I do most of my work on campus, I ask students to schedule times to meet with me rather than adopt the standard open-door office hours policy. This willingness to meet around their other responsibilities demonstrates to students my commitment to flexibility. This approach is also conducive to productivity because I schedule my writing and research during long, uninterrupted blocks of time. Lastly, I reserve one or two weeks on the syllabus for students to choose relevant topics on which they want me to lecture. These flexible weeks occur towards the end of the semester so that I have time to prepare the content sufficiently. These rotating topics keep the syllabus "fresh" and allow me to tailor class content to students' and my own developing interests.

My final principle calls for reasonable *accountability* in the classroom. Accountability naturally includes clear expectations regarding class participation, precise grading rubrics, project deadlines, and so forth. In my experience, students demonstrate increased accountability when I use creative tactics to sort and evaluate their classroom performance. Two examples are group work and class participation. Group projects are essential for learning, professional development, and lightening our grading loads. But effectively sorting students into groups and preventing free-riding are persistent problems. My solution has been to move away from spontaneous group-work and traditional group-making strategies such as randomization and self-selection. Instead, I create groups according to a variety of topics—for example, creating groups according to book chapters, theories, or organizational types—and then use an auction mechanism that allows students to select the topic(s) that interest them the most. In practice, bidding seems to make students more accountable to themselves, the group, and the project because they choose to be in a particular group because of its topic. Not only do students find the auction refreshingly different, but it virtually eliminates the rate of end-of-semester complaints about shirking groupmates. Another tactic is the class participation grade, which is typically 10% of the final grade. Here, students evaluate themselves at three points during the semester adding to one-half of the overall class participation grade (5% of the final grade). This repeated self-assessment seems to have two effects. First, despite the opportunity to inflate scores, students are generally honest in their self-evaluation and rarely give themselves undeserved credit. I intentionally 'grade' these self-evaluations by complimenting active participants and encouraging quieter students to participate more. The other effect of owning 5% of their grade is that it hinders any haggling saved for the end of the semester—such as requests for unplanned extra credit or unfair rounding of borderline grades—and makes students accountable to their earlier decisions.

Conversations about accountability should include the less discussed topic of professors' responsibility to give students the education they expect. As a first-generation college student whose family lived on both sides of the low- and middle-income dividing line, I accepted hefty loans to pay for my undergraduate education. I did not mind this investment when professors were accountable, possessing characteristics such as accessibility and punctuality, preparedness, and showing they genuinely care about teaching. I strive for transparency, flexibility, accountability in my teaching because I respect my students and strive to earn their trust.

Generous support from my doctoral program and advisors has allowed me to attend multiple conferences and fellowships. At each event, I ask professors how they balance the dual—and *dueling*—responsibilities of research and teaching. Many express negative attitudes towards their classroom responsibilities and assign blame for their lack of creative classes and stale content to the professional incentives of "publish or perish." A smaller proportion of conversations reveal seasoned professors who have achieved the impossible: who genuinely enjoy teaching, who efficiently spend the time necessary to prepare for class and mentor students, and who do all this without sacrificing their research or work-life balance. I am encouraged to know that these individuals have achieved what I hope to accomplish.

As your colleague, you will find me with a smile and positive mental attitude each day as I will strive to be make positive contributions to my new organizational community. At every opportunity I will be an ally for students, staff, and colleagues. My goal as a professor is to demonstrate that we do not need to settle for mediocrity in our courses, research, or lifestyles. We can have it all and we can show our students that they can too. We owe it to ourselves and our students to be better, kinder, and more supportive. These everyday acts of respect manifest themselves in my classroom as intentional acts of transparency, flexibility, and accountability.