

## **Teaching Statement**

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I have two primary teaching goals. My first goal is to demonstrate to my students the importance and relevance of philosophy in their lives. I love philosophy. I don't expect all my students to love philosophy. However, I do hope that they will come to understand why philosophy is important. I also expect that my students will be able to recognize philosophical issues in their lives. My second goal is to have my students develop a set of related skills: comprehension, critical thinking, and communication. Not only are these skills relevant to doing philosophy well, but they are also highly valuable transferable skills relevant to most disciplines.

I demonstrate the importance and relevance of philosophy in several ways. First, I situate topics within a constellation of related issues to show that philosophy is informed by and has implications for a range of interconnected matters. For example, in my ethics courses we discuss whether we should eat animals against the backdrop of issues such as climate change, in vitro meat, and entomophagy. I also pay special attention to current topics. As an example of this, when teaching engineering ethics, I have students analyze current engineering cases, such as the 2023 Titan submarine implosion. Second, I encourage students to work on issues connected to their lives, such as writing assignments that focus on a philosophical issue directly related to a major course of study, intended career, hobby, or formative experience. This helps students feel personally invested in what they are working on.

I develop my students' comprehension, communication, and critical thinking skills in various ways. I am explicit that philosophical engagement is not a matter of inherent talent, but of developing the appropriate skills. I do not assume that my students possess these skills coming into the course, but instead work to develop them throughout the semester. At the beginning of the semester, students are assigned course readings that focus specifically on reading and writing philosophy. During class discussion I emphasize that reading and writing are skills that we acquire over time through practice. Assignments are structured with this in mind. For example, students are expected to submit drafts of papers for feedback to incorporate into subsequent versions of their paper. This has the added benefit of making it more difficult for students to outsource their writing to ChatGPT or similar programs. I also expose students to philosophical methodology with a focus on arguments. Much of class involves reconstructing and evaluating arguments from our course readings, either individually or collaboratively. Assignments are then designed with cultivation of these skills in mind. For example, the "Resident Expert" assignment asks students to guide discussion for a class. A successful resident expert comprehends the reading well enough to guide the class through argument reconstruction and communicates effectively while fielding questions related to the topic.

Although I use the strategies mentioned above to demonstrate the importance of philosophy and to promote comprehension, communication, and critical thinking skills in my students, ultimately what undergirds my approach to teaching is my love of philosophy. It is well documented that enthusiasm in instructors is positively correlated with student engagement, interest, and attentiveness, all of which have a direct effect on student learning and academic success. I aim to bring energy that is contagious, enabling students to effectively cultivate skills and to develop a sense of the importance of philosophy.