

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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The purpose of a liberal arts education is to prepare the future leaders of our society. My privilege and responsibility as a teacher is to help equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective leadership. Analytical, critical thinking, and reasoning skills are vital. Accordingly, students should be taught to think for themselves and discover answers for themselves. I try to arouse their curiosity about mathematics by posing intriguing questions and giving real-world examples. I also strongly encourage the students to ask questions at any time and, in particular, make a point to reserve up to the first third of each class period for the students to ask questions. I also hold multiple office hours each week, so that students will have plenty of additional opportunities to voice questions or discuss anything with me in greater depth.

The classroom is an artificial environment designed to maximize learning, yet to some extent it is possible to mimic conditions of the real world. My approach to classroom management can be described as strictness with some flexibility. This proves especially appropriate in lower-level courses, and the personal examples below spring from experience in teaching such courses. Upper-level courses call for a somewhat different approach, although I have not yet had opportunity to teach any. I set due dates for homework, but do not consider an assignment to be late until the graded homework that was handed in on the due date is returned. I will still accept and grade late homework after this point, but students can get at most half of the possible credit then. I assign plenty of homework, since doing homework is a key to successfully mastering the subject material. I motivate the students to do their homework by grading selected problems without telling them beforehand which ones will be selected.

Fair treatment of the students is of utmost importance. I strive to treat all the students equally, not giving any student a privilege or opportunity without making the same privilege or opportunity available to all the students. I clearly communicate my policies and expectations to the students in a course information sheet at the beginning of the semester. I treat this syllabus as a contract with the students and attempt to follow it at all times. Any changes that need to be made to the syllabus are communicated to the students in writing.

No one cares how much you know until he knows how much you care. I am truly interested in the success of students and endeavor to show them this. This will cause most students to be more comfortable seeking out my help, will make them more interested and attentive, and will sometimes even motivate them to strive for success. I lecture slowly to make sure that everyone is keeping up and understanding the material as much as possible. I try to display an enthusiasm for the beauty and usefulness of mathematics and a hope that the students will experience some of this excitement as well.

One of my primary reasons for deciding to study mathematics was my perception of a great need for good math teachers. In particular, I have dreamed of becoming an excellent teacher who is able to help meet this need at the college level. Although I realize now that this will involve a life-long process of continual improvement, I believe that I have started down the path toward achieving this goal.