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Statement of Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is based in large part upon my own experiences (e.g. from my own teaching, from what I have been able to observe as a student, and from having parents who have both worked in education for over 35 years). I have three main goals when I teach. First, I want to ensure that every student believes that he/she can, and has the resources to, master the subject matter. Second, I try to make the subject matter as interesting as possible -and keep the learning environment low stress- so that the student is excited about coming to class. Lastly, I always tie the subject matter to real life as much as possible, so that the student can see the relevance of learning the subject matter, and realize the potential importance such applied knowledge may serve them into the future.

“¡Sí, Se Puede!” (Yes, *it can be done!*) Can I...

On the first day of class, my students will get a clear overview of everything I expect we are going to cover. My motto is “Si, Se puede!” My syllabi are very comprehensive and clear in terms of grading. I once had a professor say on the first day of class, “To get an A in my class, you need to tell me something I don’t know on an exam -- (he paused then looked the class over dramatically and said) *And I know everything!*” Needless to say, I dropped the class. There is nothing worse than having a professor whose intellectual ego gets in the way of creating a dynamic and supportive learning environment. I tend to try to cover a lot of material and expect a lot from my students come exam time, but my exams are always fair and I provide study guides as exams approach. I’m not a big fan of surprises, so if the students come to class and study what I tell them to, they will do well. I don’t like to give homework, and I don’t give pop quizzes, unless I feel that the class is not with me or keeping up, then I will give a quiz, just to gauge where the students are (where doing well on the quizzes only adds extra points to their total grade -not penalizing them for doing bad). My expectation is that students are in college because they want to learn. I want them to feel as though their intellectual ability is respected. I try to promote cooperative learning, so I never grade on a curve. When I teach a class, we are all in it together. So if everyone rises to expectation, than everyone should be rewarded.

“¡Con ganas!” (With desire!) By what means...

When I teach a class, I spend a lot of time not only writing the lecture, so that it is fun and engaging, but also to try to incorporate various exercises and audiovisual demonstrations. I prefer to use online tools such as *blackboard*, so that my lectures are also accessible outside of class. I like students to listen to my lectures and become involved and not focus on taking notes, so I oftentimes will hand out prepared note sheets if I think the day's subject matter will be particularly demanding. Not everybody learns the same, so if you are able to incorporate a variety of teaching methods, you are more likely to reach out to all of your students. If they see that you are motivated to create great lectures, they will be more motivated to learn. There is nothing more rewarding than imparting to students new knowledge, and hopefully an experience that they will remember for a lifetime.

¿Y qué!? (So what!?) *To what ends...*

This is the famous 'so what' question that is often asked after a job talk. Why did I just listen for an hour about what you had to say? What relevance does it have to society in general and to me specifically? This is an important question. And addressing the *so what* factor is important not just in a job talk situation but also in the classroom setting. Students want to learn. Learning is fun, but learning is also functional. If you ask students to memorize a bunch of things, without putting the concepts in terms of real life application, then you risk becoming perceived as irrelevant and just another 'hurdle' they have to face to graduate. As a student, I hated classes that I felt were wasting my time. Something I pride myself on is making sure every moment spent in lecture is always purposeful and meaningful to the student.