

# Statement on teaching

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In the corridor of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution Library hangs a sign summarizing Louis Agassiz's approach to learning: "Study nature, not books." When first encountering this adage, I thought Agassiz's view was antithetical to my pedagogy, but as I began teaching students and researchers within a library, then moved into instruction in more formal classrooms as a non-tenure-track faculty member, his statement became central to my own teaching philosophy. While reading can teach us a great deal, including empathy, actively working in a field leads to experience and knowledge. Though I incorporate Agassiz's idea into my pedagogy, it is through education that I seek to dismantle the white supremacist perspective with which he evaluated the world.

My teaching philosophy is holistic, and I view education as an ecosystem, with teaching and learning inexorably intertwined. I teach in order to help students mature via meaningful experiences as individuals in service to the world. I believe that, through education, people develop reflective thinking, which allows them to critically engage with information and become empathetic contributors to the global conversation. Likewise, I believe teachers must remain open to learning opportunities while advancing scholarship. Education is, at its heart, a collaborative operation. My goal as an instructor is to help learners develop the skills they need to succeed on their discerned paths, an objective that includes helping them be able to actively engage in their own educational process. I aim to teach empathy by exposing students to various viewpoints and experiences, as well as recognition of their own expertise. I ask them to consider user perspectives; for example, in a community where researchers are wary of using digital publishing tools, how can we encourage consensus while respecting the reticent users' concerns?

From my classroom experience and academic research, it has become apparent that students gain a great deal from evaluating and assessing their own work, as well as the work performed by their peers and instructor. For this reason, I ask students to write evaluations for themselves, their classmates, and myself. These evaluations are anonymous, which is meant to encourage honest feedback. Using these reports, I tailor the course to address knowledge gaps while allowing students to explore their own interests. When assessing students, I focus on their mastery of a topic rather than their comparison with other learners. I assess student knowledge at the beginning of an educational endeavor, reassess throughout the learning experience, and summatively assess at the conclusion.

To ensure accessibility within the classroom, I first make sure students know their well-being is paramount and encourage them to reach out to me with any accommodations they need, whether

or not these are formally documented. I also work with student accessibility services, as well as educational technology and information literacy professionals, to ensure students have access to support. I clearly define the course objectives and assignments, and I consider class demographics and attempt to engage each student one-on-one. When possible, I flip the classroom, allowing digital elements to give students background information that they can then use to participate in face-to-face discussions and activities, which often encourages students to model new ideas. I endeavor to create an inclusive environment where students feel comfortable acknowledging their needs and empowered in their learning environments.

Just as my students are on a lifelong journey of learning and growth, so am I. As my experiential and scholarly knowledge continues to develop, so shall my teaching philosophy. For now, my pedagogical practices are based in the holistic environment of an educational ecosystem where students and instructors share the experience of active learning. I aim to continue making my teaching student-focused to help create a better-educated population of professionals who can critically reason and demonstrate their skills in meaningful ways that impact them far beyond their time in my classroom.