Professional Teaching Portfolio Of

Curtis D'Alves

Ph.D Candidate and Sessional Instructor

Department of Computing and Software

McMaster University

Last Edited: April 10, 2021

Contact

Email: curtis.dalves@gmail.com

Phone: +905-870-3907

Contents

Part I

Teaching Philosophy

My core personal beliefs on teaching

Teaching is a responsibility. When a person assumes the role of teacher, they take on the responsibility of guiding a learners experience. On the other hand, the learner must yield a certain degree of trust with the teacher. This is not to say a students learning experience solely relies on a teacher, but it is necessary to recognize this dynamic to effectively understand the role. It is a teachers responsibility to never betray the trust of a student, this responsibility is multi-faceted and vast but put broadly the teacher must always put the students well being first and foremost. This means results achieved by conventional means of assessment cannot be the teachers only priority.

Good teaching challenges and inspires students. A teacher should offer the students more than what can be offered through a textbook or pre-recorded lectures. A teacher should present students with challenges to overcome, and inspire them to want to do so of their own volition. I entered university with a singular goal, acquire a degree. However during my first year of university, I met a professor that I'd come to do a student research project with during the summer that would change my outlook on education. He presented me with an opportunity to do real research, and although I was highly under-qualified at the time he set up series of challenges/stepping stones that allowed me to work up to the level of competence necessary to be useful. I wish to inspire other students the way he inspired me.

Teaching should be accessible. Everyone should have access to education, and teachers should be aware and accommodating of different accessibility issues that their students may face. Teachers are often to quick to assume their methods of assessment or presentation are the only reasonably effective way to teach, and that it is the responsibility of the student to adapt to them no matter their circumstances. This loses sight of the true goals of teaching, to give students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

My teaching strategies

I employ Active Learning methods in my lectures and teaching material. Active learning makes use of various activities to break up the otherwise passive experience of learning in traditional lectures. It puts a higher degree of responsibility on the student, challenging them during the learning process. And there is possibly no more appropriate field to employ active learning then computing and software. Interfacing with a computer allows a level of live assessment not achievable otherwise. By interspersing lecture content with live coding activities and discussion sessions students have a much deeper level of engagement with the material, and receive a much more adequate level of feedback than conventional assessment methods. Regular lecture sessions cease to be a passive experience where students show up simply to listen to a professor present a topic and become a challenge for learners to overcome.

I provide real world applications of concepts being taught wherever possible. Most students in STEM come to university with the dream of one day acquiring the skills to build something truly useful. For these students, the traditional university experience can be extremely disheartening. Whole subjects (calculus for example) can seem like nothing more than a form of academic hazing, meant to give students a hard time rather than provide them with useful skills. When I taught my first sessional position, an experiential learning based course in the second semester of the first year in a CS program, I laid out a clear road map with an end goal of developing a Django stack (Javascript - Python - Django - MySQL) web app managed under a GitHub repository that they could showcase as part of their personal portfolio. I found that as long as I could relate the concepts I was teaching as part of this end goal students were far more inspired to engage with the content.

I design my course content following Universal Design for Learning principles. When appropriate, I provide course content in as many different means of representation as reasonable. This means implementing redundancies for visual and audio representation in lectures and video presentations, which can be as simple as making sure to fully explain slide content verbally and providing all verbally explained content in slides and text documents. I also encourage note sharing (either for bonus marks or a means of assessment with exemptions) to help students who have difficulty taking notes. Another principle of Universal Design for Learning I follow is providing students with multiple means of engaging with me. Although I encourage students to engage with me directly in class or during office hours, I understand in person experience can be anxiety inducing. I find online interfaces (like forums and instant messaging / video conferencing) can be very effective alternatives for these students.

My goals as a teacher

Although my teaching experience is limited, I already greatly value the positive impacts I've had on my students. Of all the feedback I've received, the most dear to me are from students from a different program who have stated they were inspired by me to transfer into a computing program. The most obvious goal any institutional teacher should have is for their students to finish with a sufficient understanding of the course material. This is a very valid goal and one I hold, however I don't limit myself there. My more ambitious goal is to inspire students to want to continue learning. But this isn't the only ambitious goal I have. I wish to not just acknowledge my positive feedback but critically engage with and improve from my negative feedback. The most common theme in my negative feedback (particularly from the first few sessional positions I taught) revolve around having too high expectations on students. I believe this stems partly from my desire to challenge students, but also a personality flaw of lack of patience. One of the greatest things about being a teacher is it challenges you to grow as a person. It is my greatest goal that as I continue to improve as a teacher, I continue to improve as a person.

Part II

TODO Teaching Practice

Part III

TODO Teaching Experience

TODO Teaching Assistantships

TODO Guest Lectures

Part IV

TODO Evidence of the Effects of Teaching

TODO Teaching Evaluations

TODO Teaching Awards

TODO Observations of Teaching

Part V

TODO Teaching Development

TODO Programs and Certificates

TODO Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

TODO Conferences

TODO Teaching and Learning Networks

TODO Trained Delivered

Part VI

TODO Future Goals

TODO Short-Term Goals

TODO Long-Term Goals