Storytelling in Statements of Teaching Philosophy
(three excerpts)

1. "Because we were successful students," my first language methodology professor said, "we tend to reproduce, as teachers, the type of learning methods that have worked for us, even when we realize that they do not meet the needs of our students." Long lectures, translations, grammar…the temptation to teach as we learned is one that we have to resist—sometimes forcefully. My professor described very eloquently, I think, some of the challenges we face as teachers, both in the elementary language classroom and in culture and literature-based courses: How does a particular group of students learn a set of skills? How can we transfer what we "know" to them? What methods work best for our students and what methods do we feel comfortable teaching? At the same time, his words were also a warning, a warning against inertia, repetition and the dangers of mechanical learning. My teaching philosophy is one that focuses on change and self-questioning so that my teaching practices remain relevant to my current and future students and my approaches to learning open to suggestions and creative endeavors.

2. "It is the mark of an uneducated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." -- Aristotle

   My goal for teaching is to create an environment that facilitates and allows students to question and critically evaluate the world around them. Critical thinking, problem solving skills, and data analysis are essential for students in environmental science to learn *how* to think rather than *what* to think. However, students must have a comfortable, respectful, and non-threatening classroom and learning environment in order to fully express their views. Therefore, I strive for an enthusiastic and welcoming environment in the classroom and laboratory, and continually explore a wide variety of teaching approaches to accommodate students' diverse needs and to motivate them to connect with environmental science.

3. Early in my academic training, I made the decision to become a Human Factors engineer when I discovered a fascination with the powerful and unpredictable role of human cognition in engineered systems. Developing methods and tools to effectively support the cognitive processes of humans in these systems has since become a passion of mind. Interestingly, this same passion now drives my decision to pursue a career in academia. The process of imparting knowledge to students is, in a way, "supporting their cognitive processes" in the engineered systems of the classroom or research lab. The joy I derive from finding effective methods and tools to foster student understanding is an extension of my continuing fascination with cognition.