

Teaching Philosophy Statement

Spyros Simotas

This is your captain speaking. Fasten your belts we are about to take off. We are embarking on a journey of French language and culture. The sky is clear, and the temperature on the ground is 70 degrees. Although we may experience some turbulence during the flight, I will make sure that we land safely. Make sure your seat trays and your chairs are in the upright position. Please enjoy the flight.

The learning experience is like a journey. Although we have a goal in mind, we never really know where the journey will take us. We will traverse great distances that will, at first, be unrecognizable. From up here, we get a broad view of the French language and culture. However, along the way we will make many stops where we delve into the specifics of grammar, phonetics, and vocabulary. While I am here to ensure that we stay on course, I ask that you participate in navigating this journey. I will provide the maps that you will use to determine our course. These maps will be challenging, but once you have mastered them, you will feel empowered enough to embark on other journeys throughout your academic career and everyday life.

I endeavor to make the classroom a creative and collaborative environment. One of the ways that I engage students is by conveying the notion that learning is a constant journey. I incorporate elements of mystery and fantasy into the classroom that makes learning fun. My goal is to bring the francophone world into the classroom by incorporating authentic materials. I incorporate constructive and substantive interaction with digital media and technology into my classroom. As I am constantly exploring the web, I always find interesting resources (i.e. French language songs, films, ads, poems) to supplement the textbook. These types of authentic material will convey the diversity and the beauty of the language ensuring that students are engaged and want to continue French language study.

We tend to forget, but we all started out as learners. As educators, we must be honest about how mundane the process of learning can be, and strive to incorporate innovative pedagogical strategies. In the case of foreign language learning, which emphasizes a substantial degree of memorization and recital, the task of engaging students requires even greater effort on the part of the instructor. I hope to foster an environment where students are empowered to speak French without fear of making mistakes. Creating this comfortable space allows each student the freedom to seek out the thing that makes French special in their lives, ultimately arriving at their own individual “Eureka” moment as I did many years ago.

As a person who was exposed to two languages prior to French, I better understand the dynamic nature of language acquisition. I also understand the mechanics and the strategies that are best suited for language acquisition. I also bring a unique perspective to French cultural studies

having been exposed to perspectives characteristic of a number of national contexts. In this way, I am particularly adept to creating a diverse classroom setting that speaks as much to the long-term French learner as the student who is simply trying to fulfill their foreign language requirement. My background in advertising provides me with a toolkit to create visually compelling materials to supplement the learning process. What is more, my advertising background makes me inventive when it comes to lesson planning.

Thank you for choosing French for your trip today. I hope you will continue to fly French all the way to your language fluency.