

Juliette Bruce's Teaching Statement

As a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin - Madison I served as a teaching assistant and course coordinator for Calculus I for multiple semesters, the instructor of record for math for early education majors, and the instructor of record for a course providing students from generally under-represented groups additional support during their first college math course. Additionally, for several semesters, I held a non-traditional teaching assistantship for my role as the organizer of the Madison Math Circle outreach program. My passion for promoting an interest in and excitement for math – especially for people from generally underrepresented groups – led to take on teaching and outreach roles through the *Girls Math Night Out* and the *Wisconsin Directed Reading Program*.

In 2018, I was one of three graduate students recognized campus-wide with the Teaching Assistant Award for Exceptional Service Award. Further, my teaching and service were recognized with the Mathematics TA Service Award (2018), and the Capstone Teaching Award (2019). The later awarded to one student to recognize their exceptional record of teaching excellence and service. Further, my student evaluations are generally quite positive, for example, during my time teaching Calculus I around 98% of students agreed that I was an effective teacher.

As an instructor, I view my role is to be an active guide rather than a passive knowledge presenter. I encourage my students to explore, engage with, and question the course material for themselves. This is not to say I set my students adrift with no guidance, but instead that I try to structure as much of the course around guided group work that gives students opportunities to develop and discuss their understanding and confusion with their fellow students. In addition to encouraging students to take an active role in learning, this format also forces students to learn to vocalize their thought processes and ideas, which further aides the process of learning and understanding.

While I find this active learning approach effective in helping students, it does present challenges to both myself as the instructor and to the students. One of the largest challenges I have found and worked to overcome in my teaching is managing mistakes. In many ways, the most significant moments during the learning process are not necessarily the moments of success, but instead, are the moments of failure. In particular, I have found that the time students learn the most is when they realize something they are doing is incorrect. It is at this moment that students can recognize errors and gaps in their understanding of a subject and can begin trying to correct them. It is also the moment that as an instructor I can begin to realize what my students are finding difficult and nudge the conversation in such a way as to overcome these hurdles.

Making mistakes is hard, and most students, like most people, would prefer not to make mistakes. With this in mind, I think it is crucial to promote an inclusive environment where all students feel comfortable and safe participating and engaging. It is only in such an environment are students willing to be open about what they are confused by and where they are making mistakes. However, creating such an inclusive classroom environment can be difficult, and is something that I have found requires active attention and work to maintain.

Many of my approaches to creating an inclusive classroom environment, have been influenced by a *Inclusive Practices in the College Classroom*. For example, one activity I've implemented successfully asks students to brainstorm attributes from classes they found productive and from classes they found less-productive. After collecting a list of such attributes we use this as a jumping-off point for forming community standards that we wish to shape our classroom environment. Examples of such community standards that my classes have often adopted include: "Respect everyone" and "Address the problem not the person when discussing mistakes". I have found doing this helps the students buy into the belief that the classroom is an inclusive space where it is safe to make mistakes.

During my time as a graduate student, I have found teaching to be extremely rewarding. Going forward I am looking forward to new opportunities to grow and learn as a teacher. Further, I am excited to continue promoting inclusivity, diversity, and justice in the classroom.