

Teaching Statement

Kevin Patton

My approach to teaching philosophy is centered on finding the right balance between the intuitive and the technical, ensuring that students develop both a conceptual grasp and a deeper appreciation for philosophical inquiry. I believe that a deep understanding of philosophical concepts requires not only a grasp of their technical details but also an intuitive feel for their broader implications. Therefore, I strive to present material in a way that is accessible and engaging, yet rigorous and challenging. This dual focus helps students appreciate the beauty and complexity of philosophical inquiry.

Staying current with the latest research on best practices in class structure and assessment is a priority for me. I continually refine my teaching methods based on emerging evidence about what works best in the classroom. This commitment to continuous improvement ensures that my students receive a high-quality education that is grounded in the most effective pedagogical strategies. In introductory courses, I prioritize active engagement by incorporating regular writing exercises and class discussions centered around identifying and analyzing thesis statements. This fosters active recall, critical thinking, and deeper understanding of the material. I establish a clear and consistent class structure that includes time for individual reflection, collaborative discussion, instructor-led explanation, and opportunities for questions and clarification. This predictable learning environment promotes focus and maximizes learning potential.

Transparency is another cornerstone of my teaching philosophy. I make every aspect of the class clear and accessible to students, from the syllabus and grading criteria to assignment expectations and feedback processes. This transparency fosters a trusting and open learning environment where students feel supported and informed about their progress. I am acutely aware that many students come to my philosophy classes with diverse backgrounds and varying levels of preparation. To address this, I rely on pedagogical research to help bridge the gap and support students in developing the abilities they need to succeed. My goal is to meet students where they are and guide them to where they need to be. One of the strategies I employ to support student success is scaffolding readings and assignments. By carefully structuring the progression of course materials and tasks, I help students build their skills incrementally. This approach allows those who struggle at the beginning to find a clear and manageable path to success.

by the end of the semester. Scaffolding not only aids in comprehension but also boosts student confidence, enabling them to tackle increasingly complex philosophical problems with assurance.

In upper-level and advanced courses, I shift the focus from breadth to depth, emphasizing in-depth analysis of complex philosophical arguments. Students are required to reconstruct arguments in formal premise-conclusion form before class, fostering critical thinking and logical reasoning skills. Class time is dedicated to collaborative discussions of these reconstructed arguments, promoting scholarly discourse and the exchange of diverse perspectives. I challenge students to delve deeper into the nuances of philosophical concepts, question assumptions, and evaluate the strength of evidence presented in complex arguments, ultimately fostering advanced critical thinking and analytical writing skills.

In summary, my teaching approach is characterized by a balance between intuitive and technical instruction, a commitment to staying current with educational research, transparency in all class aspects, an understanding of students' diverse starting points, and the use of scaffolding to support and enhance student learning. Through these methods, I aim to cultivate an engaging, supportive, and effective learning environment for all my students, fostering a lifelong love of learning and philosophical inquiry.