

## Teaching Statement

### Kevin Patton

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My teaching philosophy balances the intuitive and the technical, ensuring students grasp philosophical ideas conceptually and can communicate them effectively. I present material that is accessible and engaging yet rigorous, helping students appreciate the complexity of philosophical inquiry.

I prioritize staying current with the latest research on class structure and assessment, continually refining my teaching methods based on evidence of what works best. This commitment to improvement ensures students receive a high-quality education grounded in effective pedagogical strategies.

### **Introductory Courses: Building a Strong Foundation**

In introductory courses, I create a structured, supportive environment that encourages active participation and the development of fundamental writing skills. Each class begins with a thesis assignment, where students articulate their understanding of the reading. Three students present their theses for class discussion, promoting engagement and deeper understanding. Additionally, students submit annotated notes weekly to develop key note-taking skills and reduce plagiarism.

Lectures are structured to discuss core intuitions and their broader themes, supported by detailed handouts and supplementary readings. Exams combine take-home thesis writing and in-class analysis of AI-generated scenarios, with scaffolding to progressively build students' skills. The in-class component allows students to apply theories to novel scenarios, harnessing AI to increase the complexity of cases as the semester progresses. This method helps students develop on-the-spot explanatory abilities and prevents plagiarism through handwritten responses.

An assignment at the 10-week mark involves analyzing artwork at a university museum, connecting class concepts to real-world examples. This assignment, particularly in courses like "Meaning of Life," is a favorite among students and fosters a partnership with the museum.

### **Upper-Level Courses: Deepening Analysis and Scholarly Discourse**

Upper-level courses focus on in-depth analysis, scholarly discourse, and honing analytical writing skills. Each class begins with students presenting reconstructed arguments, sparking critical evaluation and discussion. Lectures allow for tangential discussions, connecting prior knowledge to new material.

Assessments include a section summary and abstract assignment every three weeks with accompanying annotated notes. A visual representation assignment requires students to conceptualize arguments creatively, enhancing their understanding. The final exam involves essay prompts answered in class, with an optional visual representation that can reduce the number of required essays.

### **Common Threads: Structure and Adaptability**

While content and goals differ between course levels, the structure remains consistent. Both prioritize active engagement, structured assignments, dedicated lecture time, and assessments that evaluate writing and conceptual understanding. This adaptable approach tailors my teaching to each course and

student population, fostering a supportive, intellectually stimulating environment that empowers students to achieve their full potential.