Teaching Statement

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I am an enthusiastic educator with a track record of teaching effectiveness. At Princeton, I designed and co-taught a new upper-level course on the ethics of technology, and served as a teaching assistant for two introductory courses in ethics. In my last two teaching semesters, I received the highest student evaluations in the philosophy department (4.83/5, both occasions) and won the Graduate School Teaching Award for "a significant and exceptional contribution to undergraduate teaching", awarded annually to a handful of students from across all disciplines.

My teaching methods aim to create an environment for *engaged*, *active,* and *inclusive* learning.

Engaged learning. I work hard to make my students excited about engaging with the course content. This work starts with intentional syllabus design. While no single model fits every classroom, I am guided by two principles. The first is 'practical relevance'. In my experience, students find philosophical theories more interesting when they are discussed in the context of issues of pressing public concern. To capitalise on this, I'm always keen to create new courses, such as 'Ethics of New Technologies', 'The Future of Work and the Promise of UBI', 'Epistemology in the Social World', and 'Contemporary Political Issues' (see sample syllabi below). Moreover, when possible, in addition to journal articles, I include recent newspaper reporting, interviews, or works of fiction.

I also believe that 'less is more'. When designing upper-level courses, I opt for depth over breadth and focus on a small number of carefully selected topics. When teaching introductory courses, I make sure that we spend at least one full week on any given issue, so that the students have a chance to learn about contrasting perspectives and to catch up if they fall behind. The same principle applies to choosing course materials: I want to make sure that my students have enough time not just to get through the readings, but also to reflect on them. Likewise, I cap the number of written assignments at two or three, so that the students can come up with thoughtful answers, seek guidance and initial feedback from me, and refine their ideas before they submit their work. Overall, what I strive for at the level of syllabus design is captured in a student evaluation from the Ethics of New Technologies class, which I designed and co-taught in the spring of 2021:

> TAKE THIS CLASS! … Readings that were interesting but not overwhelming in quantity, so everyone actually did them, so we had super super stimulating class discussions. Topics we covered were all SO interesting, and I actually had FUN writing the essays. I think the class was both accessible to someone who had never taken a philosophy course before, like myself, but was still very simulating for even the seniors in the philosophy department.

Next, I try to identify obstacles to student engagement. A student might be shy, think that they are not cut out for philosophy, or struggle to connect philosophical ideas covered in the class to something they already care about. To remedy this, I encourage students to meet with me individually. I make my office hours as casual as possible, advertising them as an occasion to stop by for a cup of coffee and chat about anything philosophy-related. Students also have the option to connect with me via Zoom, from the comfort of their home. In addition, I make an effort to reach out to less engaged students individually, by expressing interest in talking more about something they wrote in an assignment or said during a class discussion. I often find that as a result of these meetings students become more comfortable sharing their thoughts in the classroom, confident in their philosophical ability, and excited about the course material.

Active learning. I use methods that allow students to take an active role in their own education. In the lecture room, I lean towards the flipped classroom model. I regularly punctuate my presentations with short group exercises in which students discuss a concrete question in pairs. Moreover, in a course that would traditionally have three one-hour lectures per week, I find it more effective to have two standard lectures followed by a 'town hall meeting', in which we discuss some questions submitted a day in advance, as well as thematic connections and case studies.

In suitable contexts, I'm also open to preparing pre-recorded lectures which are shorter and carefully produced, and allotting more classroom time for discussion and practice. I have extensive experience in this regard. In 2020, when Princeton University transitioned to online teaching, I created a video recording studio and produced 24 lectures for Johann Frick's "Introduction to Moral Philosophy" (available here). These lectures were well-received by the nearly 400 students who took the course, as exemplified by one student's comment:

> Lectures were very high quality, the best recorded lectures I've had. Prof. Frick does a good job lecturing and the videos really let him show that, even through a virtual setting.

In the seminar room, I often act more as a discussion moderator than a lecturer. I ask my students to come up with at least one thoughtful reaction to the readings and to post it to an online discussion board before the class, where other students can engage with it. I then incorporate many of these into the structure of the seminar, and use them to start small-group or whole-group discussions, always emphasising what makes a given contribution particularly timely or interesting. This also allows me to 'warm-call' on students who might be less willing to speak up otherwise. Moreover, I sometimes hand over the role of the moderator and join the discussion myself, inviting students to challenge and add to my contributions. As one student writes:

> The seminars were great! He put so much effort in literally organizing the outline for each session the morning of with personalized responses from the discussion board. Also, he didn't interfere with discussion, only steering when needed, always bringing up interesting points.

Inclusive learning. In all my classes, I aim to create an inclusive space for students with all background experiences, levels of knowledge, and abilities. To that end, when designing a syllabus, I include authors representing diverse cultural and intellectual perspectives, and make sure to pitch the course at the level that is tailored to the students who will be taking it. During the first session, I set explicit norms for class contributions which encourage respectful yet critically engaged discussion. I then work hard to reinforce these norms and to manage the distribution of speaking time equitably. When a student is struggling, I meet with them individually and often find that they are struggling for a reason that I can help address or accommodate: anxiety, language difficulties, or an illness or disability. I also ask my students to complete an anonymous mid-term survey to help me understand how I can improve in facilitating their learning process. Above all, however, I do my best to create an atmosphere in which every student feels welcomed, respected, and comfortable about contributing to the class. As one student comments:

> It is very hard to balance explaining stuff to beginners while not boring the more well–versed students, and I think Michal did an amazing job striking that balance. Michal also was great at pushing students to think harder/ challenging them on their points without seeming condescending. On the contrary, I felt like he really respected me as a thinker although I know very little about philosophy and he created a very warm and encouraging environment!