## Teaching philosophy

My teaching philosophy centers around the core belief that teaching and learning are about more than simply the information conveyed. Whether in the classroom, the lab, or the field, I am teaching more than just how to identify trees or how insects are classified. I strive to teach critical thinking skills, communication skills, how to work together and independently, and how to solve problems. Even students who will never use a specific piece of information in their future careers should get something out of my class. When teaching, I do my best to link abstract concepts with practical applications, and to join what might be taught in lecture with a hands-on activity in the field or lab.

I also know and recognize that in a class of 100 undergraduates, there are 100 different learning styles. While it’s not possible to fully cater to every single one, I do my best to offer a variety of opportunities and forms of learning and earning class credit. These might include short-answer exams to allow more partial credit and a better understanding of where student strengths and weaknesses, a mix of individual and group lab reports, personal reflections, extra credit for attending on-campus talks, or for independent exploration of a topic that matters to them. I maintain an open-door policy in my office in addition to set office hours and I encourage students to email me with questions they might have.

In my previous teaching experience, I’ve had students who are first-generation college students, non-traditional students, students with physical and learning disabilities, students handling mental health conditions, and those balancing school, work, and a family. Regardless of background or experience, I sought to make my classroom and lab a place where students were heard and supported. My co-instructor and I modified lab exercises where necessary without sacrificing the learning opportunities to ensure maximum participation by students who might otherwise struggle. I made information available in-person, verbally, and written out on the classroom website for reference. When students were unsure how to start, how to use resources effectively, or fail to turn in their work, I never assume laziness or apathy. I know that my class was sometimes a student’s first college course ever, and that information I think is intuitive may not be for everyone. I encouraged students to send me feedback, via email or anonymously, if they had questions, problems, or comments on things that worked well or poorly for them. Not every change was made, but every comment was read and considered.

I strongly believe in using writing such as lab reports and short-answer exams to assess learning, which allows for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of what my students are learning than multiple choice exams. Further, effective communication of findings is crucial for science and a skill that I worry undergraduates today are losing. I try to integrate lessons on writing, communication, plagiarism, citations, and more into my science curricula, where possible. I firmly oppose the use of generative AI, in professional and personal settings. Learning how to think critically, find and vet resources, and translate thoughts into communications with others are crucial skills for scientists, and are lost if students rely on a program to think for them.  
 I was an environmental science major in my undergraduate career, and I am fully supportive of the new interdisciplinary program at Oberlin. The flexibility afforded by such a program allowed me to complete independent research, study the many aspects of natural science that fascinated me, and ensured that I had a solid basis of understanding in the areas of economics, philosophy, and the humanities. Now as an instructor, I want to encourage that same exploration in students; helping them find their passions while ensuring they have a foundation in all the essentials.