

Teaching Philosophy

In teaching introductory courses, I adopt a slow and mindful approach to education. I design learning exercises, such as slow reading and stop-and-think, that encourage students to sit with challenging ideas and texts as they take in an argument over time. For example, when teaching my Business and Morality course, my students were largely business majors who had little, if any, prior experience engaging philosophical texts. I would assign short texts for slow reading which involved students reading the assigned text twice. On the first read, students were asked not to highlight, annotate, or write anything. Their only goal was to familiarize themselves with the text as a whole. On the second read, students were asked to identify and restate the main argument in their own words. In class, I would start by asking students what passages they found particularly difficult. We would then engage in a stop-and-think exercise whereby each student would read that passage alone, followed by a reading of the passage together as a class. Finally, we would discuss the text together and students were encouraged to offer any interpretive insight or raise questions.

Through exercises like these, I foster an environment of stillness in my classroom that acknowledges resistance as a part of learning, nurtures students' own ideas and views, and promotes open inquiry by asking students to take unsettling or disagreeable texts and ideas seriously. By sitting alone and meditatively reading a text prior to class, students are better prepared to connect with each other in discussion. At the end of the semester, I found that many business students wrote thoughtful and reflective essays drawing out the underlying ethical principles guiding the actions and behavior of senior Enron executives. It was clear in their essays that students engaged deeply and imaginatively with the assigned texts and they were able to independently raise incisive philosophical objections to various ethical theories. In numerous evaluations, students mention that my teaching strategies helped them better understand challenging primary texts and laid the groundwork for a robust and lively discussion. On the basis of student evaluations and faculty observations, I have received the Bo and Lynn Clark Outstanding Associate Instructor award.

I engage students as co-participants in authentic, transformative conversations about ideas and texts of enduring significance. My aim is to deliberate and learn with my students through conversation. When my students continue such conversations beyond and outside the classroom, they are fully participating in an intellectual conversation that has a long history and involves a wide array of voices.