Approach to Teaching
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At first there appeared to be a simple answer to the question what is my teaching philosophy? Nevertheless, as I pondered, I realized that the answer is based significantly on who I am as a person. The following quote by Andre Gide has guided me through my development as an educator, researcher and community member.

It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for what you are not.

From this I have learned to teach based on who I am as an individual. Too often we focus on others= expectations and we miss the truly great results that can be achieved by just being ourselves. If we take a life long learning approach to our own lives, we will constantly be adjusting and improving.

To begin, summarizing what I am not is simple. I am not:
$ an expert who has all of the answers
$ a dictator who demands blind obedience
$ an educator who believes students should fit in one specific mold
$ a teacher who utilizes a bell-shaped curve
Basically, I am not a teacher who utilizes only lectures and expects students to take tests that focus on the student's ability to retrieve insignificant details found deep in the readings.

This stated, it is a bit more difficult to summarize what I am. Simply stated, I am a person who believes in the value of the individual and that relationships are extremely important. Followed to its logical conclusion, the value of the individual also maximizes the value of the group. If a single individual is given preference or one individual is supported over a group, this would devalue the value of the other individuals. Furthermore, I believe that the overall goal of teaching should be learning and if learning occurs the grade will follow. My teaching philosophy can be broken down into the following components: environment, contract, testing & grading, and goals.

Environment
The primary component of my teaching philosophy is the development of an environment that emphasizes trust and openness. For students= to really learn they must feel free to take risks, to venture outside themselves, and to experience new things. To create this environment, I strive to be constantly sensing and adjusting. This sensing and adjusting come naturally to me because I am a high self-monitoring person. Yet, I realize that I can only control the process, not the outcome. This process is not just the classroom, but every facet of my interaction with the student. Students are free to speak with me during my office hours and outside my office hours and I encourage them to stop by whenever they can. Prompt replies to e-mails are also important. If I receive an e-mail while I am working at my computer I attempt to answer it immediately, even if only to say I don=t know, let me get back with you on that.

The environment should also address the issue of relevancy. When appropriate, I enjoy utilizing cases in the classroom. Cases let the students see how things happen in the real world. They also provide an excellent platform for discussion. Along with cases, I find it useful to require students to scan their environment and discuss their findings in the classroom. The scanning may be in the form of reading business periodicals and posting a summary to a list for other students to learn from or it may be in the form of actual real world projects. Relevancy can be increased through the use of groups. Groups provide the student with an opportunity to interact in much the same way they will interact in the work place as well as a platform for increased learning and understanding.

The environment must also emphasize rigor. Each class has a certain level of expected rigor. This expectation is clearly defined in the syllabus and is reinforced regularly throughout the term. Each class

has a structured format that assures achieving the expected level of rigor while providing opportunities for additional learning.

In a learning environment, I believe that being in a learning mode is necessary for all the participants. A student must make it their personal responsibility to learn and it is my responsibility to facilitate that process. It is my objective to guide the process and maximize understanding. Therefore, I must be prepared to receive questions that are beyond my current understanding and I must be willing to learn along with the student.

Contract

I have a policy of dealing honestly with students. The syllabus is my contract with the students and it outlines what I expect from the students and what the students can expect from me. If a student fulfills their end of the contract and according to that contract deserves a AB@ they will receive that grade even if it does not create a pleasant distribution. Likewise, if a student fails to fulfill their end of the contract, they will receive the appropriate grade. Steps are taken throughout the term to open lines of communication and to assure that; if possible, the student can maximize their learning and avoid a poor grade. As with any contract there is room for negotiation. I try to begin each term with a couple of negotiating points to increase the students'= involvement in the class design. Throughout the term, I attempt to adjust accordingly to recognize special circumstances. Any adjustment made for one student is available to all students.

Testing & Grading

Examinations should focus on learning and not ease of grading. Sometimes focusing on regurgitation is necessary for exams. Regurgitation is especially relevant in the foundational classes. Nevertheless, when appropriate, I prefer to create exams that allow students to show Asigns of intelligence.@ Realizing that the goal is learning and not a grade, when appropriate, opportunities to redo previous work are provided. Students are then able to learn through their mistakes. These opportunities are not simply a chance to fix their mistakes, but an opportunity to apply their learning to a different problem. In a case-based class this might be in the form of analyzing an additional case. In this context, the student has the opportunity for additional learning.

Testing and grading are directly affected by the contract. The expectations of the class are clearly outlined up front and when the test is administered it should simply be a reinforcement of those expectations. A student earns a grade; I do not assign a grade.

Goals

I have four goals that I attempt to bring to every class. The first three goals are student focused and the final goal is instructor focused. The three student goals can be seen as perspectives.

The first perspective is a global perspective. Students must realize that the American way is not the only way. The world is now and interdependent web and the ability for a student to succeed will be greatly influenced by their ability to move within the web. In day to day conversations and classroom discussions, it is important to encourage students to learn about and experience other cultures. If the opportunity presents itself, traveling to other countries and learning other languages are useful for students.

The second perspective is a technology perspective. Simply stated, students should learn IT (Information Technology) not fear IT. Even in MIS classes, students have a fear of IT. Students need to realize that IT is impacting every area of our lives and the sooner they can get comfortable with it the better off they will be. Students should take every opportunity to Aplay@ with technology that they can find. Even if the experimentation does not lead to in-depth understanding, it will increase their awareness and their ability to adapt to uncertainty. Students should also put a greater emphasis on critical thinking skills and offset these skills with specific technologies. The pace at which IT is changing makes it almost impractical for a student to focus on specific technologies and employers desire students who can think and are not bound

by specific technologies.

The third perspective is a personal perspective. Students are entering a very competitive workplace and the environment is constantly changing. To account for this environment it is important for students to view themselves as products or packages. Students should be attentive to creating specific core competencies that will lead to personal competitive advantage in the marketplace. The degree is not the end of learning for students. They need to realize that we are in an environment driven by lifelong learning and as such they need to concentrate on developing character that is offset by marketable skills. Evidence of the skills may be in the form of professional certification. However, the evidence of their character is much more difficult to define and will make them stand out.

The final goal is an instructor goal and this goal emphasizes research. When possible, I attempt to keep my research relevant to the classroom. However, I realize that there will be times when it is not. But in general, my research should influence my teaching and my teaching should impact my research. This type of synergy will create much better research and much better teaching.

As stated earlier, my teaching philosophy is evolving and changing, yet it based on who I am as a person and reflects my value on the worth of the individual and relationships. Effective teaching is an interactive process in which teacher and student bring differing perspectives, knowledge, experiences, and insights to facilitate the process we call learning.