

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My philosophy as a teacher is to inspire students to open their minds to the adventure of learning by cultivating curiosity and to empower them to grow intellectually by taking responsibility for their own learning.

I adhere to the premise that learning is a journey rather than a destination. Therefore, learning how to think and learn independently is of paramount importance in the educational process of every student. Students learn in many different ways and from many different sources. They learn by listening, by observing, by doing, and by creating associations. They learn from each other, from their experiences, from their environment, from the inspiration given by teachers, and from the example of role models.

I believe that the role of a teacher is to guide students in their educational journey by providing direction and help in overcoming obstacles and hurdles. Teachers must inspire and motivate students to expand their horizons by planting the seed of curiosity in their minds and challenging them to grow intellectually. Teachers must be flexible enough to adapt their approaches according to the needs of the students, the subject matter being studied, and the setting in which the educational experience is occurring. Teachers must recognize that students deserve to be treated as individuals rather than as part of a collective. Teachers must serve as role models in all aspects of their interaction with students in and outside of the classroom.

I want my students to truly enjoy learning by further developing their skills as critical thinkers and problem solvers as a result of their participation in my classes. I expect my students to learn how to entertain a thought without accepting it; and how to analyze a problem, from all possible angles, before jumping to a conclusion. I expect my students to understand not only the widespread application of construction engineering and management principles, but also the challenges that the profession faces and its responsibilities to society.

I implement my teaching philosophy through several means. First, I show sincere interest in my students as individuals. I learn their names, respect their opinions, and provide access to my expertise. I offer access to my students through e-mail, telephone, and office hours. I maintain an on-line calendar for students to check my availability and request an appointment or take advantage of my open door policy if they cannot come during my official office hours. I guarantee my students that their e-mails will be answered in less than 24 hours regardless of weekends or holidays. I also maintain web sites for all of my courses to provide students with easy access to course information, assignments, readings, presentations, and other materials and to facilitate learning outside of the classroom. I implement these policies for the benefit of all, but especially for our non-traditional students. I enjoy supporting non-traditional students in their efforts to improve their lives and achieve their goal of using education to open new opportunities for their future.

Second, I take advantage of all sources of knowledge when conducting my courses. I often ask students for their own personal experiences in the subject matter under study. Some of our students have worked in the field for years and can bring insightful contributions to the class. I also require group work in several of my courses to encourage students to develop their interpersonal and presentation skills. I often bring the most recent and relevant research to the classroom in order to broaden the perspective of my students and introduce them to some of the challenges that our profession faces. I also invite guest speakers to my courses to provide practical case studies and examples of the materials discussed in class and to allow students to

interact with our industry and to further develop their inquisitive minds by asking questions and challenging the presenters. In one of my courses, CM 412: Construction Practice, I require my students to read two books and write a critical paper about each one. I implement this assignment to demonstrate to them the enjoyment of reading, the importance of taking responsibility for their own learning, and the virtue of building their own independent opinions.

Third, I place emphasis on the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills in all of my courses. I want my students to be able to see the forest and not just one tree. My tests usually reflect this by including problems where students need to carefully analyze the situation before embarking on any calculations, as the problems may not have a solution at all or the number of possibilities may be overwhelming, and some rational upfront elimination of alternatives may be necessary to solve the problem in the time provided. I also require my students to state their assumptions when solving homework problems or working on group projects. I often question the reasonableness of these assumptions by providing them with opposite arguments and examples and requesting counterarguments. I also enjoy entertaining discussions about controversial class topics and encouraging students to state and defend their opinions and listen and evaluate other people's positions.

Finally, I continually strive to improve my students' learning experience through the enhancement of my courses. I accomplish this by welcoming continuous feedback from my students about their progress, my teaching ability, the guest speakers, and the course structure among other topics. This feedback is usually provided through anonymous e-mails that students submit via the class web site. I enjoy addressing these concerns and making the necessary midcourse corrections throughout the quarter as necessary. I also analyze the formal student evaluations performed at the end of each quarter to develop new approaches for the following year.

In conclusion, I feel responsible as a role model to guide my students in the pursuit of their dreams and I want them to feel my enthusiasm and commitment, and to carry that forward in their own life.