

Teaching Philosophy Statement

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Teaching has been one of the greatest joys of my life. Students come in with their own ways of seeing things and ask questions that make me think in different ways, so I am always trying to find better, simpler ways to explain the tricky concepts. It's a constant learning process that goes both ways, and that's what makes teaching so rewarding. When I took my first two programming courses, most of my peers had prior programming experience and were already programming competitively, while others, like me, had neither owned a computer before nor had any programming background, so it was easy to "fall between the cracks". That experience made me deeply committed to ensuring that no student is left behind, no matter their background. This belief is the foundation of my teaching philosophy, which is built on three core ideas:

1. **One size does not fit all:** Students learn in different ways; some thrive when given a technique and opportunities to practice it. Others prefer to see multiple examples and develop their own technique, or a walkthrough on how the theoretical concepts apply to every single line of code. I provide a variety of teaching approaches so that everyone can find something that works for them.
2. **Listen and empathize:** Students should not be afraid to ask for help when needed. Understanding students' individual worries and motivations to adjust their instruction to fulfill their needs promotes a safe environment where "all questions and opinions are valid."
3. **Embrace change:** Programming languages come in all shapes and sizes for a reason; industries are constantly evolving, our thinking does too, so teaching strategies need to evolve as well. That is why I'm always looking for new tools and methods to keep class content fresh and engaging.

With more students curious about learning how to write computer programs, teaching large enrollment courses can be a challenge, but I see it as an opportunity to build a strong sense of community. I openly reflect on who I am as an instructor, by sharing with students my core experiences as an undergraduate student and how they impact my teaching methods. I'm mindful of creating an open and welcoming, flexible and adaptive environment where students feel they belong, but I also communicate clear expectations for the course and all course components (assignments, discussions, activities, etc.). I promote pair-programming in class activities to help build connections with other students, encouraging peer learning and group discussions, which are crucial when tackling difficult concepts.

I take a blended approach to teaching: lectures are for introducing and reinforcing ideas, and recitations are for practicing them through problem-solving and teamwork. In our hybrid setup, I've adopted a flipped classroom model, where students review reading materials before class. I use quizzes to check their understanding and adapt my in-class activities based on their responses, making sure to focus on areas where they need extra support. When students struggle, I offer extra review sessions, orientation for assignments, and office hours where we focus on breaking down problems and exploring different design strategies. I also rely on my course staff to provide additional support. I encourage them to develop their own teaching skills by leading sections, hosting office hours, and engaging with students directly. This not only helps the students but also empowers the course staff to grow as educators.

Grading is as flexible as my teaching. Since students come from diverse backgrounds, I use a mix of assessments: quizzes, problem-solving assignments, comprehensive exams, and participation in recitations and review sessions. I look not just at what students know but at how much effort they're putting in and the progress they're making, especially in hybrid courses where managing time can be tough, and it could be challenging to stay consistently engaged. By focusing on growth over perfection, students feel encouraged to push themselves, knowing their efforts are noticed, and more importantly, valued.

Throughout my career, I have taught in-person, hybrid, and fully online courses, which has helped me become a more dynamic instructor. I frequently attend workshops and seminars to learn new digital tools to present course material and enhance student engagement, and to learn new teaching strategies so I can reflect on my current teaching practices. However, students' feedback is the most critical part of my teaching assessment as it allows me to know what facilitates or obstructs their learning, so I can make real-time adjustments to improve teaching effectiveness. Nurturing and understanding the community from the start, brings students and course staff together to advocate and support each other, and it allows me to constantly seek areas of improvement that continue to shape my teaching philosophy to become a better instructor for all of my students.

