

## Teaching Philosophy

As a teacher of science, I often encounter students that don't feel they are capable of learning and understanding the material I present. There is a stigma that says, "science is for smart people" not, "science is for everyone". I think this is one of the biggest challenges I encounter in teaching as well as one of the most rewarding aspects of it. One way I try to overcome this stigma is by making science fun. For example, during the first lecture in my Plant Taxonomy course, I introduce the topic of classification of plants. Before I give a history of how classification has been done in the past, I ask the students to form groups and give them 10 plants that they should classify. They are asked to be prepared to defend the reasons behind grouping the plants as they do. This gives students hands on experience with plants and makes them really look at them to determine how they should be classified and why. Then as I give a history of classification they are able to relate to the material in a way that they could not have previously.

One thing I remember from my own experience as an undergraduate is the difference between being a name on a roll and being a real person that had a name. As an instructor I feel that it is very important to know my students by name, for them to know each other by name, and for them to know my name. When we are able to address each other by name the atmosphere in the classroom is more comfortable and students seem more willing to ask questions both of me and of one another. The ability to ask questions makes any topic less daunting. I have found that this comfort level extends outside of the classroom as well with students more frequently coming by during office hours for extra help both during the semester and even during later semesters.

While I strive to be approachable and create an atmosphere in my classroom where students are able to ask questions, I value the process of thinking thorough a problem and being able to answer difficult questions for oneself. I try to encourage this by asking the students questions that will get them thinking about the topic in a different way when I see that something we have covered is not quite clear. I have taught several lab courses that have provided me an opportunity to interact with each student on a one on one basis. In these situations it is easy to address student questions by asking them a question in return that will help them think through the problem on their own.

One part of my teaching that I am constantly striving to improve is my use of technology in the classroom. I use power points during most classes I teach because I feel that most of the concepts can be well illustrated using figures and diagrams. The ability to have these images on screen in front of the class allows me to explain and show a visual of the concept simultaneously. I am a blackboard user and I think that most students are comfortable with this technology since it is pretty widely used across the campus. It's a great way to help keep the entire class organized both for the students and myself. By posting assignments, lecture handouts, and grades

in one spot the students always know where to look when they have a question about the class and I am able to keep everything I need for a course in one convenient location.

I love teaching and sharing the joy I find in science with others. I approach each class section with enthusiasm so that the students can't help but be excited about the material being discussed. I try to relate the topics being covered to the everyday life of the students so that they can see the value in what they are learning beyond the desire to earn a grade and pass the course.