

Learning Commons

Academic Writing Center - Graduate Students



Composing a Teaching Philosophy

The Basics:

The purpose of a teaching philosophy is to describe how you teach a certain way, and why. While there are no set rules for writing a teaching philosophy, generally they are one to two pages, single-spaced, written in the present tense, and include specific examples from your teaching.

Organizing Your Philosophy

There's no required format for teaching philosophies. People choose to organize their statements in a variety of ways. Some people organize their thoughts around stated goals, phrases/quotes that influence their teaching, or even rhetorical questions. Regardless of how you choose to organize your statement, you want to be sure to include information about these three points: the objectives of your teaching, the methodology you use to achieve those objectives, and an assessment of your teaching effectiveness. For ideas of what to include for each of the points, consider the following the questions:

Objectives

What are your goals as an educator?

Beyond teaching the required material, what do you hope students learn in your classroom?

What are your responsibilities as an educator?

How can you help advance your field through teaching?

Are you working to combat problems that have historically been associated with teaching in your field?

Methodology

How does your approach to teaching help students effectively learn the course material and meet your objectives?

What are some specific examples of your teaching being effective?

What materials have you created to aid in the learning process?

How do you incorporate different methods to meet various learning styles?

Are there any pedagogical theories that you apply to your teaching?

Assessment

How do you know your students have met the learning outcomes of the course?

What have students written (in evaluations or emails to you) about your teaching and/or the course you designed?

What quantitative data do you have about your teaching effectiveness?

Has a colleague observed you teaching? What was their feedback?

How do you work to improve your teaching?

Further Resources:

Iowa State University, Center for Excellent in Learning and Teaching – “Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement”
Ohio State University, University Center for the Advancement of Teaching – “Writing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement”
Cornell University, Graduate School – “Teaching Philosophy Statement”

Questions?

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