

Written for a church related Liberal Arts College—she got the job

Teaching Philosophy

The central goal of my teaching philosophy is to be creative and adaptable to the type of environment (e.g. small intimate classroom or large lecture hall) and the type of student (e.g. quick learner or struggling non-major) I encounter. I use the skills and resources available to encourage my students to be actively involved in their learning. In small classes and laboratory settings, I believe the greatest resource an instructor has is the ability to build a relationship with their students that is grounded on mutual respect and collaborative learning. Additionally, small classes offer the opportunity for creative class activities where students get up, move around, and learn with all of their senses. In a large lecture hall, where it is harder to establish a personal relationship with each student and for students to move around, instructors can connect and interact with their students through the use of technology, such as iclickers, online websites, and YouTube videos.

Regardless of the type of class (big, small, discussion, laboratory), I always aim to build an environment where my students respect and trust me as their instructor and where they actively participate in their own learning. I do my best to get to know my students and I make myself available to them both in and out of the classroom. I encourage students to ask me questions and to come speak to me personally during office hours. I challenge my students to think critically by constantly asking them questions about the material and I often rephrase their questions back to them to encourage them to think critically on their own before searching for an answer from me.

I really enjoy interacting with my students. When I teach discussion sections or laboratory courses, I roam the classroom to make sure I have an opportunity to talk with each group of students. This gives them a chance to ask me questions directly and not in front of the whole class and it allows me to get a feel for how well they understand the material. For struggling students, I can then step in and re-explain concepts, or for inquisitive students, I can direct their attention to where they might learn more about a topic. In large lecture halls, I still believe in roaming up and down the aisles so that students do not see the lecturer as some

figure at the head of the classroom, but rather see the classroom as a dynamic learning environment. In large lectures, I find iclicker questions to be a great instant resource to survey the class to see how well they understand the material. When a significant proportion of the class answers a question incorrectly, that suggests that a particular part of the lecture needs to be reviewed or clarified.

Being creative is more fun and interesting for the students and encourages them to be actively involved in their own learning. When I teach discussion sections, I try to use as many different learning methods as possible, which includes drawing diagrams of the plasma membrane, acting out the components of an action potential, and playing review games before exams. My goal is not only to make the classroom an interactive learning environment, but also to address the fact that each student has a different learning style. In laboratory courses, I have noticed that the experiments that are truly hands-on, like working with live animals or performing dissections, are the ones that students are the most excited about, find the most engaging, and therefore learn the material best. In these small classes, I encourage students to learn from and teach each other by creating group activities. In large lecture halls, iclicker questions force students to interact with the lecturer instead of passively sitting there. Interesting videos, such as live brain surgery, can capture student attention, and they can be followed up with questions such as, “Why do you think the doctors kept the patient awake during surgery?”

Teaching is about connecting with students in a way that helps them learn and grow. Sometimes that connection is face-to-face in an environment that encourages them to learn, but does not expect them to perform. Other times making those connections involves finding what excites and engages students most, whether that is online videos or hands-on experiments. Making connections involves being creative and adaptable as each environment has its own unique set of needs. My goal is to be as creative and adaptable as possible so I can reach my students and encourage them to be actively involved in their own learning.