

A Statement of Teaching Interests

I thoroughly enjoy teaching and I am especially excited about teaching geography, and more particularly urban geography. My interest in geography is wide and I can teach a broad range of introductory and advanced course. Also, if there is student demand in areas such as art, culture and urban renewal or urban politics and governance, I would gladly develop courses. In addition, my background in philosophy from Clark University and my continued study of social theory and history in graduate school at Johns Hopkins University allow me to teach any standard undergraduate course in the philosophy of the social science of geography as well as the history of geographical thought.

My desire to pursue a career path that includes teaching flows from the immense respect that I have developed for teachers in my life. I attribute much of my own educational success to the great teaching I have received from patient, passionate, and thoughtful instructors. I continuously strive to help students learn and be excited about the subject matter I am teaching, and to provide the highest quality of instruction. Excellent teaching consists of a dynamic pedagogy that paces the abilities of students, helps them develop skills for tackling problems, and promotes self-critical learning. A teacher's role is to be an enabler in a larger learning process and, therefore, to inspire students to become interested in subjects, learn new ways of thinking and analyzing the world, and improve their critical capacities. As an educator, I help students become more critical thinkers, better writers, and acquire a certain amount of knowledge, but this, of course, is not a one-way street. Often, I benefit from teaching. It helps me boil down the essential points of an argument and find the clearest way to present complex material. Moreover, I have often found that students will make insightful criticisms of the classroom material. Another benefit of teaching is building the bridge between research and teaching, because the classroom is an excellent forum in which to present, explore, and refine new ideas.

My teaching strategies vary between lectures and seminars, but there are some commonalities. In a large lecture hall, I believe, a professor has to behave as if it were a performance and draw in the attention of the audience. Hence, I often show pictures, play music, and use daily news events at the beginning of a lecture to draw students into the lecture. Moreover, I speak loudly, am very animated, and make jokes. In smaller seminar settings, I use somewhat different strategies to teach. I am still very passionate and often open the seminar with pictures or a humorous story that is relevant to the material. However, in a seminar setting it is important to create a classroom environment that is open to discussion and debate, and I encourage students to think critically and disagree with me and the positions of authors we read. It is also important that students see how differently people can approach the same topic; therefore, I assign a range of books and articles from lots of fields and schools of thought. Moreover, I like to employ a wide variety of literatures - such as novels, articles, and books - and multimedia - such as videos, documentaries, and audio programs - to help students understand that the topics discussed in class have a wider significance.