

## ***Statement of Teaching Philosophy***

### **What is my approach to teaching?**

As a teacher of political science, my main goal is to enable my students to think logically and clearly about political questions. I think it is important for students to emerge from an introductory course with a clear understanding of how the world works, rather than just having them merely recall definitions and textbook facts. In all my courses, I attempt to motivate my students to get interested in government and politics in general and to help them apply what they learn to current political issues and events, whether at the local, national, or international level. Teaching enables me to give students the chance to understand a bit more about the world in which they live, with the hope that each of them will gain a better understanding of some of the issues we face and will in turn do their part to improve their community.

### **How do I teach?**

The central approach I use in my teaching to accomplish these objectives is to engage students in the material. I do this by exhibiting unbridled enthusiasm for my work. The courses I have taught in the past have generally been required courses, not electives; this often leads students to be less excited about the material than they might otherwise be. Engaging students with real-world examples, an abundance of enthusiasm, and a bit of humor seems to help most of them overcome their initial lack of interest in the material.

In the classroom, I assume the role of Plato's gadfly and attempt to get students to "think outside the box." Every semester, I am stunned by some of the assumptions my students have about the world and other cultures. I often have students question the status quo and challenge them to re-examine the thoughts

that all too often were merely imposed on them by socialization. I use multidimensional methods to teach students effectively and to ensure that I present the material in a way that allows everyone to understand it. In addition to class discussions, group work, debates, simulations, written assignments, and presentations, I use instructional technology. In my onsite and hybrid courses at DeVry University and Gloucester County College, I frequently use PowerPoint presentations to make lectures more interesting and to reach students whose learning style is more visual than acoustic. As a complement, I often incorporate the use of short video clips to further expand upon important concepts discussed in class. In my courses at DeVry, I have used the university's eCollege system to administer online quizzes, monitor and engage in online discussions with my students, and to present an additional forum for learning. My students have been receptive to these approaches, and I hope to make further use of them in the future. For my introductory Political Science course at Gloucester, I designed a course website to complement their onsite learning. I have recently begun to experiment with podcasting and hope to incorporate this technology in the classroom soon. However, when technology fails, I still rely upon the trusty blackboard.

Whatever methods I use to reach students, I always strive to maintain a classroom atmosphere that, while serious, is also somewhat relaxed and friendly. My enthusiasm for the subjects I teach helps foster this atmosphere. I believe a balanced use of all of these methods helps construct a thriving learning-centered classroom.

### **In Sum**

For me, teaching is exceptionally rewarding in that I share my knowledge with my students and they, in turn, share knowledge with me to which I might not have

been privy. In addition, since I started teaching, I have learned a great deal about myself and have also refined my teaching techniques based upon student and faculty evaluations.

Teaching is, undoubtedly, the best vocation that I could have chosen to pursue. I find myself frequently pondering how to improve my students' learning experiences while honing my own pedagogical skills in the process.

At both DeVry and Gloucester, I have attempted to recreate the inspirational classroom atmosphere I remember from my years at Bloomsburg University and City College. I have enjoyed the opportunities to have students learn about themselves and the world around them. Anonymous evaluations by my students over the past year have been consistently enthusiastic, stressing my knowledge of the material, accessibility, and effectiveness in teaching. I love and look forward to each day that I spend with my students, and I believe that the passion I demonstrate is necessary in being an excellent instructor.