

John Haman – Statement of Teaching Philosophy
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My teaching philosophy is guided by three principles that include: identifying and engaging student needs, continued pedagogical evaluation, and effective student-instructor rapport. This pragmatic and adaptive strategy isolates the information-processing aptitudes of the students while continually fine-tuning techniques to utilize these capacities in the classroom.

Students today are immersed in digital technologies that have become second (or first!) nature to them. I think it is safe to say that this environment of “digital immersion” has changed the way they process information and interact socially with others. This reality has opened new opportunities for teaching and learning both inside and outside the classroom. One example of technological integration I have used in the past involves posting discussion questions online. Each week, students respond to prompts that require them to engage with class material and write an analysis. This task requires them to react directly to the reading and also, importantly, to the observations of their classmates. Before they walk in the classroom door, students have a starting point for discussion, a position of their own, and access to an array of similar and divergent classmate perspectives. This often results in fruitful discussions that were started in cyberspace and continued in the classroom. Digital technology also allows me the opportunity to post content such as supplemental class readings, news articles, and links to relevant webpages that can also be referenced in classroom dialogue.

The process of personal evaluation is another principle I believe is central to effective teaching. For me, the best time to review my teaching methods is immediately after each class or later in the day when the memory is still fresh in my mind. Usually I take a few minutes each week to write down what seemed to engage the students, what did not, and any ideas for future improvement. I use these notes at the beginning of the following semester when the observations I wrote down will influence future course designs. I also seek out conversations with colleagues to compare notes on teaching strategies. These interactions continue to provide a wealth of information and ideas that allow me to avoid pitfalls and further improve successful techniques. One of the most enjoyable parts of the teaching process for me is the team atmosphere that develops between educators in a department.

In reflecting on my teaching to date I believe the most effective approach I have employed involves developing productive student-instructor interactions. Simply, I believe that competence, humor, and fairness are critical components of trust in human relationships. In my experience, communication between teacher and student that is built on a successful mixture of these elements has a high chance of being effective and rewarding. In the School of Journalism I primarily teach skills-based courses that train students in technologies and investigative practices they are unfamiliar with and often intimidated by. I have observed that students excel when they believe I have given them the tools and support they need for success. This mindset is a mix of the practical (the training I have given them) and the psychological (helping them to feel that they can succeed). I strive to provide both to the best of my ability by maximizing personal interaction in the classroom, whether by helping students edit their work, discussing future project ideas, or simply making sure they are comfortable with the material.

These teaching principles are infused with a spirit of continued learning on my part and are influenced by my experiences in the classroom and conversations with my colleagues. Following these guidelines has greatly increased my appreciation for teaching. And I think my students appreciate our work together, too.