

**Statements of Teaching Philosophy  
by 2010 Recipients**



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I grew up in Scotland in a dysfunctional family and in a place where school meant strict discipline and fear. Corporal punishment was a regular part of the curriculum. At UCLA my classes consisted of hundreds of students, and I have no recollection of ever being in a professor's office much less in their home. My stay at Pepperdine has been a dream come true. I have tried to give my students the kind of education I never had and our three daughters (two professors and a journalist) the kind of parenting I never had. In a way my students are my children, deserving the education and love we gave to our daughters.

This is my 25th year teaching at Pepperdine in a non tenure-track position. I have been asked by Administration to focus on teaching and fulfilling the University's Mission rather than on publication. I have a 4/4 teaching load which on several occasions has become a 5/4 overload. Over the years I have taught a number of different courses, but in recent years it has been in three different divisions: Social Action and Justice in the Humanities Division (a two year colloquium I created with two other faculty members nine years ago, commonly referred to as SAAJ), Interpersonal Psychology in the Social Science Division, and Organizational Behavior in the Business Division. In addition, I am the Director of International Internships, the Director of Service Learning, and the Director of the SAAJ Colloquium. For the past eight years I have been a mentor to new faculty and for the next two years I will be the mentor to ten Posse Scholars who are coming to Pepperdine from underrepresented and diverse populations in Washington, D.C.

When I think of my teaching style/philosophy, I look to the world's two greatest teachers: Jesus and Socrates. A few of the many significant attributes I learned from my two role models are: using stories in teaching, making learning relevant to the students' lives, challenging students to think deeply and critically, teaching outside of the classroom, motivating and inspiring students and respecting them, making use of everyday problems to teach, creating productive discomfort by asking probing questions, and focusing on moral education.

I now use novels to teach in SAAJ rather than the textbooks I previously required. By using the story I am able to create a level of excitement and interest in discussion that the textbooks did not produce. For example Gaines' *A Lesson Before Dying* involves race, class, religion, justice, poverty, and gender. We are able to dig more deeply into these issues by use of the story. Emerson tells us, "Fiction reveals truth that reality obscures." I had a group of day laborers come to visit the SAAJ class. They were undocumented people, for the most part, who wait at the bottom of the hill for day work. One woman told of how she pulls weeds or does housework to send money to her children in Central America. I asked her, "How long since you have seen your children?" She answered "Four years" and began to cry. This brought out issues we had discussed in T.C. Boyle's

*Tortilla Curtain*, another of our assigned novels. This incident involved the class in ways that they had not experienced before and her story showed reality and created involvement and discussion more than any lecture or textbook could have.

Twenty-nine years of management experience and the grey hair that goes with it have produced many stories that I can use as case studies in teaching Organizational Behavior. I hope that students can learn from my mistakes as well as my successes. I am reluctant to provide answers. Students need to find their own, and we can investigate what these answers produce. I worked for a year at a hospice spending time with the dying. Stories from this experience help my students in my Psychology class deal with the patients they see at the service site where they spend time. This is a demanding experience, which stimulates critical, creative, and spiritual thinking that I firmly believe is a fundamental part of a good education. Sometimes I wonder if I am giving the students too much of a challenge. At the end of every semester I ask if this is so; with very few exceptions the students admit that they were out of their comfort zone but that the experience significantly enhanced their learning. They recommend that I continue to challenge others in this way. I know that much learning takes place outside the comfort zone as long as it is not too far out.

I try to teach outside of the classroom as much as is appropriate. All my classes do service learning. This is not volunteer work, as the service is tied closely to the class material. Oral and written reflection is always required. The process is time consuming and rigorous, requiring a significant amount of time, preparation, organizing and logistics on my part, but the benefits far outweigh the costs. My students go to Skid Row, visit prisons, and work with the handicapped at several locations. On one occasion the SAAJ class spent the day at a facility for the severely handicapped. We met a 30 year old woman who weighed 40 pounds who was blind and in diapers. One of my students sat down next to her and sang to her for half an hour. In this particular case the student was our teacher.

Understanding of our social, economic and moral problems, in my opinion and that of my mentors, is best understood outside of the classroom. In Mark 25:35-40 we are told how to enter the Kingdom. I believe students in all my classes, including the Business class, fulfill the requirements for such Entrance: serving the hungry, the homeless, the sick and dying, and those in prisons. (I published an article in *The Journal of Management Education* that describes the model I use for this). How can I not be proud of these young people? This Fall SAAJ is adopting an elementary school in Haiti. This is a sustainable project that we hope will last for years and be managed by students with my oversight. We currently have service internships of all kinds in Buenos Aires, London, Shanghai and Lausanne. This is a critical and fundamental part of a good education that confronts students with "real world" challenges. I expect them to think deeply and critically and reflect about the issues at hand. It is my responsibility to guide and direct them as they navigate this challenge.

I am always asking questions--probing questions that force students to think critically. I believe that the answers often lie within the students and my task is to pull the answers out of them, thus having each student own the idea rather than my giving it to them. I ask why. What does this mean? What will the outcome be? What will this lead to? What will

you do and when? Socrates taught Meno, a slave boy, geometry by asking questions. I do my best to follow his example and it more often than not works. This technique often creates a productive discomfort, which sometimes leads to temporary silence, but through gentle persistence and always respecting the student I am able to bring forth critical and creative thinking that often amazes and excites both the student and myself. This requires emotional as well as cognitive intelligence. I promote the use of emotional intelligence and the capabilities it produces particularly in times of stress. (I published an article on this with Mark Mallinger in *The Graziadio Business Report*.)

One of my greatest rewards is staying in contact with my students after they have graduated. I still keep in touch with former students in Africa, India, in fact all over the world who are doing all kinds of work. I am honored that they still seek my advice and counsel and that they remember me. Last month I heard from a student who graduated 14 years ago. He now is married with two children and just bought a house in Malibu. Over dinner we talked about his career choice and how I had challenged him on his choice. Challenged through probing questions. He found his own answers through this process and came back to thank me. How blessed I am to be able to play these roles in young people's lives. Dr. Mallinger, now an Associate Dean at Graziadio, was one of my students when I taught in the MBA program at California State University, Northridge. I have been his professor, his mentor, his close friend, his associate and colleague for 39 years!

Moral education and ethical behavior are important parts of my curriculum. One needs only to read the newspaper to see the paucity of ethical behavior on our planet. I see this as a major part of my responsibility as a professor and of course it relates directly to the Mission of the University. This topic is covered in every class and it is not beyond me to bring in the morning newspaper and teach by asking questions that involve the students in the everyday world that is a part of their lives. Some students perceive me as the "nice easy going professor" and I have to warn them that I have very high expectations of them and this will not change. They usually catch on after the first paper comes back or the first midterm. I expect involvement, participation, excitement, commitment, high academic achievement, critical thinking and, importantly, a concern for their fellow human beings, who indeed are their brothers and sisters. We send these young women and men out into the world as our future leaders of tomorrow: the teachers, doctors, lawyers, artists and ministers, those who work in government and in corporate America. While in school I feel students' top priority is to achieve academic excellence and to represent and lead through both character and action that support the community, their fellow students, faculty and staff and the Mission of our University and to contribute to a legacy of leadership refined and honed at Pepperdine. This is a daunting task as a teacher. I take it most seriously. I believe in my students, I have high expectations for them, and am open and available to help them reach their goals. My students never interrupt my work; they are my work.

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*Anthony M. Collatos*  
*Associate Professor of Education*  
*Graduate School of Education and Psychology*

I am humbled by the idea that my students and colleagues have nominated me for the Howard White Teaching Award. Since my arrival at Pepperdine University, I have received incredible support from colleagues who encourage me to strive for quality teaching and meaningful research. I have found multiple opportunities within the Graduate School of Education and Psychology to incorporate my teaching philosophy and my commitment to work with urban schools. Within my classes I hope I have influenced my graduate students to inspire their K-12 students and to serve their broader school communities. Ultimately, I believe that when we provide students the opportunity, the space, and the tools necessary to examine the educational system; they engage in transformative experiences that lead them to become critically-minded educators.

**Dialogue and Love are Core Aspects of Teaching**

I often begin my formal presentations with a quote by Paulo Freire that emphasizes the power of dialogue as the core component of dialogic pedagogy and authentic teaching. Freire writes, “If I do not love the world — if I do not love life — if I do not love people — I cannot enter into dialogue.” As an educator, I return to this quote frequently because it reminds me that through dialogue, we can understand our differences and the numerous commonalities that we share. Although curriculum, subject content, lesson plans, and assessments are critical to effective teaching; none of these elements are possible without our ability to communicate with each other. As social and cultural beings, it is our ability to interact which allows us to learn most effectively. Similarly, I believe our ability to see one another as both student and teacher is essential for authentic dialogue to occur. Freire explains further that true dialogue cannot exist without *humility, faith, hope, and critical thinking*. Along with the willingness to reflect, I believe these are the essential components of being an excellent teacher.

I am also reminded that we must be passionate about our profession and to be an effective teacher we must love—to care deeply about—our students. As educators, I believe we have been conditioned to diminish the importance of love, and too often, we focus solely on the intellectual endeavor at hand. If we, as educators, are to love our students, then we must provide them with all the academic, personal, and spiritual tools they need to become the best teachers and leaders possible. This is especially important for new teachers that choose to work with the most severely challenged students and in the most under-resourced low-performing schools.

**Effective Teachers Create Safe Spaces for Learning**

I work hard to create a safe space, or a community of practice, where my students can address issues of cultural diversity, social and cultural foundations, and schooling. I purposely scaffold several learning activities in my classes to achieve this goal. As a teacher educator, it is my role to prepare pre-service teachers, to work with diverse

populations. When preparing teachers for placements in different schools, a safe space is critical to explore difficult themes such as: race, ethnicity, culture, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, faith, language, and exceptionalities. The challenge is to create an authentic and safe space to explore these issues, while also recognizing that safe spaces, especially within classrooms, take time to develop. As educators, our actions can help foster or inhibit such spaces and I work hard to create a caring and safe learning environment.

### **Answering a Call to Serve**

When working with pre-service teachers, each day presents an opportunity—inside and outside the classroom—to prepare students for lives of *purpose, service, and leadership*. I believe my teaching philosophy is best represented by my work within the Social Action Strand, also more commonly known as the Urban Parent Teacher Education Collaborative (UPTEC). The Urban Parent Teacher Education Collaborative is a community-based model of teacher education that includes urban parents within the pre-service teacher education program. Each year, I team teach a cohort of students with Ms. Mary Johnson, a grassroots parent advocate, within the Masters of Education and Teacher Credentialing program. All of our UPTEC students select to work with low-income, first-generation, language minority, and culturally diverse students attending urban schools. In addition to their regular MAETC coursework, our UPTEC students are placed together within school sites where they are expected to develop programs, “to serve” the school community. I believe this service encourages pre-service teachers to improve the schools where they teach; rather than merely see their schools as locations where they were “placed” for work. We often refer to this philosophy of teacher education as *answering a call to serve*.

Each year we meet with school leaders (e.g. principal, academic coaches, lead teachers) to discuss an action research project designed to serve the school community. The projects often supplement a service the school is unable to provide or expand on existing programs. For example, our pre-service teachers at Stanford Avenue Elementary School created a successful science enrichment program and other teachers at South Gate High School led a college access academy. All of these efforts were an attempt to provide a space for discovery, integration, application, and teaching.

The different spaces within UPTEC, as extensions of the formal classroom, become spaces for learning and discovery. I believe the graduate students are able to better recognize the intersections of educational theory, policy, and practice as they assist students in these multiple spaces. Beyond their normal teaching responsibilities, graduate students learn to teach in alternative settings as they help elementary students master a science lab or assist secondary students with a college application. The service to students becomes an authentic opportunity for teaching and learning; moments where they are able to integrate and apply theories and strategies in their school site. These daily experiences then become part of our weekly Pepperdine classes and are tied to theory, pedagogy, and application. I believe the year-long action research approach provides an opportunity for graduate students to engage in a process of discovery and creates a space where “theory and practice virtually interact and one renews the other” (Boyer, 1990, p. 23).

We experienced tremendous success preparing, placing, and retaining our teachers in urban schools. It is hard to believe that we have completed four years of UPTEC and approximately 85% (2006-2010) of the graduates continue to teach, and 85% of those teachers are working with marginalized and urban students. I am especially proud that the Urban Parent Teacher Education Collaborative was recently selected as a best practice for parent involvement and teacher education by the Los Angeles County Office of Education. I feel blessed that my work—my teaching—is also my vocation.

### **Teaching as a Vocation**

Much of my teaching and research has centered on student advocacy and empowerment. I believe strongly that it is our role to advocate for student growth and to guarantee that our graduate students are prepared to teach *all* children in all schools and communities. In addition to the efforts described above, I believe it is important to help graduate students explore if teaching is their vocation—a calling to serve others. Part of my own vocation is to prepare teachers to work with those most marginalized within our school system. I hope my efforts within schools create spaces for K-12 students and their families to reach their full potential and to maximize their opportunities. In turn, I hope these same spaces become spaces of empowerment for my graduate students as they choose a vocation that works with youth and the future of our community. I hope to continue developing close relationships with my graduate students and serving as a teacher and a mentor long after they have graduated my courses. My nomination for the Howard White Teaching Award is a testament to my graduate students and the K-12 students that allow us into their lives.

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*Margot Condon*  
*Lecturer in Education*  
*Graduate School of Education and Psychology*

My philosophy of teaching is a reflection of my own beliefs, experiences, training and what I believe is right. The first time I entered my own classroom, I knew this was where I was meant to be. That feeling has stayed with me my whole life. This spark makes me continue to create a classroom where students can feel special and explore ideas that interest them. I believe that the educational setting should be a place that represents a caring, creative environment, where laughter is heard and the freedom to investigate is encouraged.

A century ago, John Dewey understood that how students are taught is as important as what they are taught. In today's diverse classrooms, methodological paradigms that accept the notion that "effort produces ability" are key to reaching the ultimate goal of

enhanced student achievement and social growth for all students.

As every practitioner in the field of education knows, education is always taking place. My values and core beliefs provide a foundation for my views of education. I believe there are four components that are the key elements of my personal philosophy.

I believe learners are individuals who bring a unique set of needs and abilities to the classroom; therefore, I am committed to the education and growth of the whole individual.

In my classroom, students experience hands-on activities and current educational theories that address their holistic needs. They explore their intellectual, spiritual and emotional dimensions, as well as the dimensions of their own elementary and secondary students. As a facilitator, I involve them in “real life situations” that challenge and encourage them to discover meaning, develop identity and research a variety of pedagogical approaches. This is done in an environment where they can take risks, think “out of the box” and collaborate with classmates.

I believe, as a learning community, I must link theory to practice. The rich scientific base of applied psychology in education must be explored and understood if innovative change is to occur. Then curriculum can be linked to classroom experiences through rigorous explorations of theoretical foundations, solid research-based methodologies and the art of reflective practice.

I believe, as professional educators, that teachers must work closely with families to enhance the educational system. Authentic collaboration by all stakeholders must take place to provide students with external support, accountability for all and guidance in developing life-long learners.

Finally, I believe as an effective, caring teacher that I can continue to inquire, reflect and expand my knowledge so my students have all the knowledge needed to assess their own teaching strategies. I realize the positive influence I have to potentially change the life of a student. I know that my “open door” policy, support, and guidance can impact a prospective teacher. I have seen it. What each individual does today to improve the lives of others is the most rewarding contribution any of us can make.

The most important impact that my personal philosophy has had on my teaching is that my students and I work together to create a passion for life and to spread the spirit of love. My teaching strategies and evaluation methods are varied, so they all have the chance to succeed. I will continue to provide a loving, motivating and creative learning environment in which my students can grow. My passion for teaching and my enthusiasm for continual knowledge will be forever present.

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*Warren Joseph Hahn*  
*Assistant Professor of Decision Sciences*  
*Graziadio School of Business and Management*

As part of an academic community with so many outstanding teachers, I am sincerely honored to be considered as a finalist for the Howard A. White Award for Teaching Excellence. I appreciate the opportunity to present a statement of teaching philosophy, although I certainly don't claim to have my teaching approach all "figured out". I learn something new each time I teach a class, and have yet to offer a class without making changes from the previous offering.

It might be helpful to begin with a bit of context; my subject area is Decision Science (sometimes referred to more generally as "Management Science"), which encompasses a wide range of technical topics, including probability and statistics, decision analysis, simulation and risk analysis, and optimization. In the four years I have been at Pepperdine, I have taught core classes in Applied Data Analysis and Quantitative Business Analysis, and have also developed and taught elective courses in Real Option Valuation (synthesis of decision analysis and finance) and Multi-Attribute Decision Analysis (advanced decision analysis).

My basic teaching approach in each of these courses is to provide a balance of underlying theory, illustration of analytical methods via classroom examples, instruction on relevant software tools for implementing the analytical methods, and opportunities to independently apply techniques learned to homework problems and cases. My teaching methodology typically includes a mix of lecture, demonstration and problem solving sessions to keep the class in constant motion ("learn it, see it, do it"). I have taught courses with this same basic methodology in all of our degree programs that offer Decision Science (Full-time MBA, FEMBA, EMBA and BSM). In each case I have tailored the approach somewhat for the different types of students in the different programs.

**In the classroom:**

The first day of each class, after reviewing the syllabus, I always begin by asking each student to tell me a little about their academic background and employment history (if applicable), as well as their future career interests. This helps with establishing a relationship with the class, and it also allows me to learn about the different perspectives my students will bring into the classroom. It is not uncommon for our students to represent a wide spectrum of undergraduate majors, and to have widely varying mathematical and computational skills, work experience levels, and cultural backgrounds. If I am to work effectively with each unique class, I must take all of these factors into account in selecting assignments, establishing the pace of the class, setting the balance of lecture versus discussion, and all other aspects of managing a course.

I make it a point to be thoroughly prepared and well-organized for each class session that I teach. At first, this simply seemed to be a matter of common sense, but over time I've noticed that students frequently comment about evidence of class planning on course evaluations, and I've come to think that they perceive it as a sign of my commitment to them. I also always try

to arrive early, because the time before class is a good opportunity to strike up informal conversations, and hear about what else students have going on in their lives. It is very easy to think that my class is always their first priority, but that is often not the case. For example, I sometimes learn about major exams or projects that students have due in their other classes, in which case I try to be flexible with due dates for assignments or projects in my class.

A major part of each of my class sessions is “workshop time” during which students exercise their problem solving skills. After lecturing on a topic and illustrating an application of an analytical technique, I typically give the class a related, but different, problem to solve. This is a task with which many students struggle mightily, but because no two business problems are alike, it helps them develop critical skills that will serve them well after graduation. I think students appreciate the chance to take on this challenge during class, when I am there to assist them as needed, before they are required to do it for their homework and case assignments. Management Science can be a difficult topic for many students to master and my courses are not easy; my average student evaluation ratings for the degree of intellectual challenge and the degree to which critical thinking is required are 4.7 and 4.8, respectively, on a 5-point scale. Therefore, I try to do everything possible to build students’ confidence and abilities before they attempt individual work on assignments or exams.

At all times during class, even while I’m lecturing, I try to be observant of each individual student. Are they struggling? Are they bored? Do they need a few more minutes to complete a computation? It is tempting, especially if much time was invested in planning a session, to want to adhere to the plan and stay on schedule. However, I think that students are better served if I can stay flexible and adapt my plans to the flow of the class. I also begin each class (after the first day) by reviewing the solutions to the homework assignment due. As part of this review, I ask students questions to try to find out if and where they experienced difficulty with the problems. This is effectively a way of observing how students have fared outside of class, which helps me to determine whether to do “remedial instruction” before proceeding with the course.

Software tools for statistical analysis, decision trees, simulation and optimization have revolutionized teaching in our field by allowing the tedious “number crunching” to be done quickly and easily. I have often heard from students who have taken previous courses in statistics or management science that they had bad experiences that consisted mostly of formula memorization and exercises in manual calculation. In my courses, students use academic versions of some state-of-the-art software packages that are used in industry. This allows us to spend much more of our time thinking critically about problem-solving, especially how to frame problems for analysis, and about how to interpret the output in terms of practical business implications.

Finally, speaking of practical implications, I encourage students to ask, at any time during the class, why the topic we are covering is relevant to them as future business managers. Students are probably at first reluctant to ask such a question, for fear that it might offend me or signal a lack of interest on their part, but they quickly discover that it is among my favorite questions to answer! Business is a very applied discipline, and I should be able to explain how even theoretical topics ultimately apply to effective management. This seems to resonate with

students; my average evaluation rating for the degree to which practical implications are brought into my courses is 4.8 on a 5-point scale.

**Beyond the classroom:**

Outside of class, I try to be as accessible and responsive as possible. I am generally in my office when I am not teaching or in a faculty meeting, and I let students know that they are welcome to stop by at any time. Outside of “business hours”, and for classes that I teach outside of the Malibu campus, I try to respond to e-mails and phone calls as soon as possible – sometimes immediately, but almost always within the same day, including weekends. The last thing I want is for a student to get stuck with a homework problem, and then become discouraged because they cannot get help. I also strive to give prompt feedback on all assignments, making sure that graded papers are returned by the next class session at the latest. Although I usually turn around papers quickly, I make sure that feedback is thorough, including not only detailed descriptions of grade deductions, but also guidance on how the grade could have been improved.

I spend a significant amount of my time outside of the classroom engaged in research and writing, but I believe that these activities can also complement my teaching. In fact, one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve had during my time here at Pepperdine has been the opportunity to bring some of my research work into the classroom in my elective class on Real Option Valuation. In this class, students are introduced to the latest advances in project valuation, and we discuss recent publications, ongoing research projects and conference presentations, and open problems in the field, as well as the application to problems of current interest, such as valuing flexibility in the production of alternative fuels. Feedback from students has indicated that they enjoy the challenging nature of this course, and like how the course integrates Management Science with Strategy and Finance (in fact, the course is cross-listed as a Finance elective). I co-teach a second elective course in Multi-Attribute Decision Analysis in which students learn an analytical framework for decision-making which allows managers to explicitly incorporate social, ethical and environmental factors, in addition to traditional financial metrics. This course provides another opportunity to share research with students, and is also an excellent forum for carrying out our school’s mission of producing values-centered leaders.

I want the connection with students that I mentioned earlier to extend beyond the classroom and, in fact, beyond the time they spend in our program. As a teacher, I often think about this connection in terms of stewardship. When I graduated from high school, my godparents gave me a plaque which reads “What you are is God’s gift to you. What you make of yourself is your gift to God”. As a professor, I think I’m now in a great position to help my students think about that same personal challenge, but this kind of mentoring doesn’t happen *in absentia*. I have a “Dads” calendar on my desk that reminds me that our children spell love T-I-M-E, and the same applies to students. Since I am in my office most weekdays, my students (and even some that aren’t mine) often drop by to chat about non class-related issues, such as which other courses to take or which career path to pursue. I also enjoy spending time with students through my role as faculty advisor for our Pepperdine C4C (Challenge for Charity) chapter, and attend or volunteer at functions whenever possible. I have also hosted students in my home for our “Dinner with a Professor” program and C4C leadership team meetings.

Ultimately, I hope my students know that I am forever invested in them, and I take heart in the calls and e-mails I routinely receive from alumni to update me about their activities.

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*Robert G. Kaufman*  
*Professor of Public Policy*  
*School of Public Policy*

I am honored once again to receive the nomination for the Howard White Teaching award. Consider it a tribute to my students and the atmosphere at Pepperdine, which bring out the best in me.

I inherited my teaching style from my parents, also teachers. I strive as well to emulate the best of my finest professors in college and graduate school at Columbia and in Law School at Georgetown. Here is my philosophy in a nutshell: set high expectations high; then your students will exceed them. My goal is to teach students how, not what, to think, consistent with Pepperdine's mission that the truth will set you free.

Even though we apprehend truth dimly, truth exists. We are obliged to search for truth with zeal but also with humility, knowing that nobody has a monopoly on it. Applied to public policy, I strive to convey to students that true Judeo-Christian morality requires a rigorous analysis of the ethics of consequences as well as intentions. For the search for the perfect is the enemy of the good. On my best days, I contribute to refining and enlarging students' deliberations about the major challenges in the realms of foreign policy, national security, and American domestic politics.

My excellent students, fine colleagues, and marvelous environment for teaching and scholarship Pepperdine make my work a pleasure rather than a burden. Thank you.

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*Nathaniel J. Klemp*  
*Assistant Professor of Political Science and Philosophy*  
*Seaver College*

Over the last two years, Pepperdine University has given me many amazing gifts: the opportunity to teach enthusiastic students, to explore new research ideas, and to become a member of a caring community of scholars. I feel honored to be an assistant professor at Pepperdine and especially grateful to have been selected as a finalist for the Howard A. White Award for Teaching.

During my years in college, I had many outstanding professors. All of them displayed impressive knowledge. All of them introduced me to new concepts and ideas. But only a handful changed my life. One of these professors was Ray McDermott, a cultural anthropologist with a thick New York accent in the School of Education. On a whim, I signed up for his class “Technologies of the Mind.” Somehow, Ray managed to merge cutting edge educational theory with readings on everything from Shakespeare to Marx to Toni Morrison.

But it was not the reading list that made his course life changing; it was his ability to bring the abstract ideas of educational theory *to life*. In fact, Ray introduced me to the very notion that ideas and concepts could be thought of as “live or dead.” He pointed me to William James’ view that an idea becomes dead when it “makes no electric connection with your nature,” but that it can come alive when “it is among the mind’s possibilities.” Using stories, creative experiments, and humor, Ray inspired us to see these ideas as live possibilities capable of shaping our experience. He encouraged us to become intellectual explorers, tracking how categories of race, religion, and political economy impacted our lives.

Since I started teaching five years ago, I have tried to recreate this experience in my own classroom. I use a mixture of lecture, discussion, and creative exploration to create an environment where ideas can come to life. As a professor of political theory, I do this by drawing connections between the great political thinkers of the Western tradition – Plato, Machiavelli, Rousseau, and others – and the lived experience of my students. When we read Machiavelli, for instance, I want them to understand his conception of fear. But I also want them to apply Machiavelli’s view to political advertisements, rhetoric, and other practices of modern party politics. I want them to see that his insights extend beyond 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy – that they also help us understand the politics of our current age. In my experience, this attempt to bring ideas to life in the classroom arises from three primary aspects of teaching: *application, passion, and engagement*.

***Application***

I like to think of the great political theorists and my students as inhabiting different worlds. Aristotle’s world consisted of small-scale city-states. It was a world that viewed slavery as “natural” and “democracy” as a threat to political order. My students inhabit a

different world. They live in the world of mass democracy – a world where alternatives to democracy have been cast aside and where Facebook, Google, and other forms of technology enable global connections. So my job is to inspire application – to point students toward the connections between these worlds. Before each class, I ask myself: how do these worlds fit together? What insights from Aristotle’s world help us understand our own?

I see this kind of application as working on two levels. First, I relate the ideas of these great thinkers to the politics and practices of our own age. When we discuss Aristotle’s idea that the virtues of the masses can be combined to surpass the virtues of a handful of excellent individuals, I like to discuss Wikipedia. I want them to see that the structure of Wikipedia embodies a similar idea – namely, that the contributions of the many may surpass those of an elite few. I also want them to question these connections. I want them to ask: does Wikipedia confirm Aristotle’s theory? Are there other practices that call this theory into question? My hope is that drawing these connections will help them better understand Aristotle and the political and social practices that surround them.

For me, application is not just about drawing connections to the world around students but also about drawing connections to their inner world. Whenever possible, I encourage students to use the texts as a vehicle for exploring their spiritual, moral, and political beliefs. When we read Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, for instance, I ask them to write a two-page paper on his idea of simplifying life to its essentials. I ask them to describe three ways they could simplify their own life. When we read the works of C.S. Lewis or Kierkegaard, I encourage them to reflect upon their own faith. At the start of class, I have them write a brief paragraph on their conception of faith. We then examine how their pre-reflective understanding of faith differs from these thinkers and how these thinkers challenge or reinforce their existing beliefs. In each of these cases, the goal is to inspire self-reflection.

### ***Passion***

I have found that passion plays an essential role in making abstract ideas more vital and living. As Ralph Waldo Emerson declares, “nothing great has ever been achieved without enthusiasm.” Passion, or its absence, has a contagious quality. On days when I enter the room excited about the material, my students come alive. Their discussions become more inspired, their interest deepens, and they become more invested in the material.

One of my primary practices as a teacher is cultivating passion and enthusiasm. Before I walk into class, I go over my notes and spend a few minutes reminding myself why I love the text. I try to go back to my first encounter with the authors’ ideas and insights and re-experience the emotions they evoked. Then, when class begins, I try to elicit the enthusiasm of my students. At times, I do this by pointing them to passages and ideas that they might find inspiring. At others, I do this by pointing them to passages and ideas that I know they will find challenging and provocative. When we read Hobbes, for instance, I like to emphasize his pessimistic view of human nature: his idea that we are all egoists incapable of trusting one another. “Is Hobbes right?” I ask. “Is it true that you cannot trust

another human being, even those closest to you like your parents or siblings?” The goal is not to get them to agree with Hobbes but to elicit passion, to get them to care.

When I am successful in cultivating this spirit of passion and enthusiasm, I find that I become more creative and dynamic in the classroom. More important, I find that my students come alive – that they begin to experience the text as offering exciting opportunities for growth and reflection.

### ***Engagement***

What made Ray’s class life changing was not simply application and passion; it was his deep engagement with us. I will never forget the day that he invited me to coffee to talk about my research project proposal. Ray listened closely to my ideas and used his vast knowledge to help me express my own voice more clearly and creatively.

In my courses, I do my best to mirror this deep engagement with students. When students ask questions or show up to office hours, I pay close attention to their concerns. While I have my own biases and views, I try to let these go and open to the ideas and insights that they have to offer. Recently, a student active in the Pepperdine College Libertarians came into my office hours and told me that she wanted to write a libertarian reading of Karl Marx – to argue that the libertarian state realizes the essence of Marx’s theory more closely than communism. I initially thought this was a crazy idea; but, as we spent an hour brainstorming, we began to develop some fascinating connections between libertarianism and Marxism. By letting go of my preconceptions and focusing my attention on helping her express her own voice, I learned something new about Marx and she ended up writing an inspired and creative paper.

While working to engage students, I also try to create a space where they can respectfully engage one another. When I teach, I mix lecture and discussion to ensure that students have the opportunity to pose challenges and questions to one another. This culture of engagement plays an essential role in bringing the ideas and insights of my courses to life. When students feel respected and listened to, I find that they begin to care more about the material.

Reinhold Niebuhr, one of my favorite theologians, writes that “Original sin is that thing about man which makes him capable of conceiving of his own perfection and incapable of achieving it.” In this statement, I have outlined the philosophy of teaching that I strive toward as I walk into class each day. I agree with Niebuhr, however, that it is important to remember that this is an ideal – one that may be impossible to realize fully. Nevertheless, I try my best to use each text, each lecture, and each discussion as an opportunity to bring the ideas of the great political thinkers to life. If these efforts inspire even a single student the way that Ray inspired me, I will know that it was worth it.

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*Peter R. Robinson*  
*Associate Professor of Law*  
*Pepperdine School of Law*

My philosophy for teaching includes three concepts: personal curiosity, intellectual honesty, and a healthy environment for exploration.

A healthy environment for exploration has many elements. Students are more likely to be engaged and open to be affected by the class experience if they know that I care about their well-being. This requires me to respect their opinions and perspectives. This is fairly easy for me, since I teach in a field with a vast spectrum of acceptable strategies: dispute resolution. My teaching philosophy includes a commitment to never humiliate a student, even when I disagree with their comment.

The healthy environment for exploration also must include a willingness to challenge students' status quo. The ethic of caring that is concerned that the student feel respected and safe also includes concern that the student improve his or her life by mastering the material. Again, because I teach dispute resolution courses, the content of the courses are life skills that can immediately benefit a student's personal relationships and prepare students to handle sensitive professional situations with finesse. Students know that I care that they master the subject matter of my course and have high expectations of their effort because this subject matter is so important to their future success. My goal is to make the student feel safe and challenged. Students in my classes include mid-career lawyers and other professionals who will not respect a class or professor that isn't challenging.

The healthy environment for exploration includes reciprocal intellectual honesty. I admit to students that my views are influenced by my limited life experience. I invite them to challenge me and my "take on the material." I announce that we have all figured out ways to manage our conflicts and that every strategy has strengths and weaknesses. There are myriad reasons why many of my personal strategies may not work for another person. I announce that I will try to be intellectually honest and present many approaches, but there will be times when I inevitably lapse into my own baggage. I let the class know that I relish when the class catches me on one of my soapboxes and challenges me to further complexify my model. I admit to the class when I am not satisfied with my analysis on an issue and solicit their suggestions for improvement.

Reciprocal honesty includes allowing me to be honest with students. I am honest with my criticisms of me, with examples of ways I have failed to appropriately manage myself and others. I am honest with my criticisms of class materials and the dispute resolution field. I am honest when I believe a student's response to class material requires more analysis or complexity. By inviting the class to challenge my analysis and strategies, I create a class culture in which the most important thing is to pursue understanding. Modeling constructive dispute resolution methodology, results in a culture where differences and disputes are welcomed as an arena for understanding and learning. The dignity of

everyone in the class must be guarded by the professor, but knowledge and understanding must be pursued without compromise.

The balance between the supportive class environment and intellectually honest culture is advanced by my quirky sense of humor. I am a natural tease. My teaching philosophy includes making the class fun/entertaining by including a whimsical interpretation of many things. I strive to keep students on their toes by being “playful in conversation” with the class. I am interested in them, but encourage all of us to not take ourselves so seriously.

The final theme of my teaching philosophy is to be personally curious. What is interesting about the subject/topic for that class session? If an interesting aspect doesn’t jump off the page, I think about how to make this topic interesting. For example, I hope all of us will offer an apology when we believe we have done something wrong; the interesting question is how to handle a request for an apology when we do NOT think we have done something wrong. I like to challenge generally accepted theses to explore when they don’t work. I prefer an unresolved dilemma to a simple solution. The endless number of personal/contextual/cultural variables that contribute to a thoughtful dispute resolution repertoire allow for genuine curiosity about how others handle conflict.

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*Sonia Sorrell*  
*Visiting Associate Professor of Art History*  
*Seaver College*

It is a great honor to be nominated for the Howard A. White Award for Teaching Excellence. I am truly blessed to have been given the opportunity to spend my life in the fulfilling and meaningful pursuit of knowledge, teaching, and learning. Teaching has been my life-long calling and I can only hope and pray that my efforts have glorified the Lord and enriched the lives of my students.

In the first years of the twenty-first century, the Association of American Colleges and Universities convened a national panel of educators and experts to discuss the future of higher education in the United States. The results of their discussions were published in *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College* (2002). In that document, the panel stresses the importance of liberal education, which they define as a “philosophy of education that empowers individuals, liberates the mind from ignorance, and cultivates social responsibility” (25). According to the panel, the goals of a liberal education require institutions of higher learning to teach students to become “intentional learners who can adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from different sources, and continue learning throughout their lives” (xi).

The observations and recommendations set forth in *Greater Expectations* were a welcome affirmation of what I have always believed to be my main goal in teaching: to create educated, responsible individuals who can think critically and who possess a life-long love of learning. The Seaver College Mission Statement sets forth specific goals for our graduating Seaver students. Using the Seaver College Mission Statement as a model, I have specified the following goals for my Western Culture I students:

**The Seaver College Mission Statement**

1. the ability to continue the quest for knowledge
2. the ability to think
3. the ability to communicate
4. a broad cultural perspective
5. moral integrity and a sense of personal values
6. an enhanced potential for service

**HUM 111 Western Culture I**

1. basic knowledge, universal skills
2. critical thinking, active learning
3. ability to write and argue clearly
4. embrace diversity, global viewpoint
5. value-centered perspective
6. understanding, compassion

Western Culture I is an overview of Western cultures from the early ages of humankind through the Middle Ages. Through an integrated study of politics, religion, literature, art, architecture, music, theater and philosophy, we examine the creative channels through which the peoples of the West interpreted human experience and defined human nature. We also explore how all histories are constructs, or interpretations, and in this way engage the students in the construction of cultural meaning. In Western Culture I, students learn to look at information and events in their historical contexts. This ability will prove useful not only in their study of ancient history, but in their everyday lives as well. For example, we know that climate had a great affect on peoples and events in the ancient world; how could global warming affect our own time period? In Western Culture I, we examine connections such as the affect of religion on politics and vice-versa, how literature reflects a people's values, how politics affect the arts, how geography affects a culture's outlook on life, and so forth. We also examine topics such as diversity in the ancient world, the contributions of women, peasants, and unfree laborers, the role of marriage and family, and the influence of other cultures on the Western tradition. Students learn to look critically at the past, to interpret the often conflicting sources, both primary and secondary, and to apply those "knowledge connections" to their own multicultural and global world.

Through their various activities and experiences in Western Culture I, students are challenged to operate at each of the cognitive levels: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation (from Bloom's *Taxonomy*). Students move from basic knowledge of facts, through the various cognitive levels, to higher level thinking exercises. Multiple-choice questions assess the students' knowledge of persons, places, things, events, and dates, whereas essay questions allow students the opportunity to focus on the interconnections between and among the cultures we study and the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary themes of religion, politics, law, philosophy, values, technology, cross-culturalization, art, architecture, theater, music, geography, climate, natural resources, daily life (women, men, peasants, slaves), "isms" (such as spiritualism and humanism), and legacy. In the essay exercises, students encounter knowledge in new and complex contexts, allowing them the opportunity to grapple with

challenging problems, evaluate conflicting viewpoints, deal with open-ended issues, and create their own responses to these new situations. These latter activities will help students evaluate information they encounter outside the classroom in such sources as news media, publications, television, and film. Essays are evaluated based on writing style and grammar, evidence of critical, analytical, and creative thinking, and mastery of the course material and objectives. My standards for assessment are very rigorous, as my GPA's will attest, yet fair, as the students so often comment on the course evaluations.

Western Culture I is an interdisciplinary course covering thousands of years of history. Unlike the popular conception of history as an established, unchanging list of "what happened," the discipline of history is a dynamic discipline that is continually changing; there are always new developments in historiography, factual content, and pedagogy within the discipline. Teaching history involves keeping abreast of current developments and constantly reassessing course material, instructional and assessment techniques, and course goals and objectives. I find myself continuously thinking about my courses, reading new sources, reevaluating what I'm doing and why I'm doing it, and questioning the usefulness and meaningfulness of what I'm teaching and what the students are learning. I believe it is essential to present to the students the most recent understanding of historical events and to engage the students in the construction of historical contexts in the most meaningful and current manner. Always at the heart of my questioning lie the issues of what do the students need to know, what skills do they need to develop, and how will this material be meaningful and useful in their lives?

In the classroom, I create an informal, welcoming, and non-threatening environment. I arrive early to set-up, so when students arrive, I'm free to talk with them and to answer questions. I begin each class session by creating an atmosphere of anticipation and excitement—I point out that the events we are about to study are not dry artifacts of a distant past, but living clues as to who we are, where we came from, and what we will become. Too often history is told as a series of names, dates, generals, and battles—facts to be memorized and then forgotten. I see history as a fascinating unfolding of events in human history, with each event interconnected to the events that came before and after. I see my role as a storyteller—I try to tell the story of history in a manner that will engage, excite, and involve the students. I recreate the immediacy of the historical events, interspersing facts and details with real life anecdotes and humor. I want to whet the students' appetites for historical knowledge and to introduce the students to the excitement of discovery, the joy of learning, and the satisfaction of recognition.

In an introductory course that covers such a broad chronological time period, I believe it is essential to be well organized. We discuss thousands of years of history in Western Culture I and it's easy for students to get lost. I supply, and follow, detailed Lecture Outlines and Thought Exercises for each class session. In addition, I regularly ask and invite questions to make certain the students have a good grasp of the topic at hand. To help bring the topics to life, I use numerous digital images, including maps, diagrams, illustrations of art and architecture, reconstructions of scenes from daily life, and portraits of individuals whom we are discussing. Through carefully selected primary and secondary readings, lively and well presented lectures, open and challenging course

discussions, and fair and meaningful assessment techniques, students are offered the opportunity to develop and practice their critical thinking and active learning skills.

Outside the classroom, I do my utmost to be available to meet with students at their convenience. I have found that regular set office hours seldom coincide with the schedules of all 500 of my busy college students each term. Therefore, in addition to being available at set times each week, I let my students know that I am also available to meet with them at times that fit *their* schedules. When meeting with students, I always set aside ample time; often the root of an issue or problem cannot be uncovered in a brief and hurried meeting. By creating a comfortable and unrushed atmosphere, I turn “office hours” into opportunities to explore deep issues and concerns, to share life experiences and aspirations, and to create lasting friendships. In advising students, I try to impart anticipatory thinking skills, careful planning strategies, responsibility, and self-reliance.

The Christian Mission of Pepperdine University is central to all I do and to my very being. I do my best to model our Christian mission both inside and outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, the students are at the heart of my efforts and I focus all of my energies on their learning and their well-being. I see each student as a unique individual created in God’s image. Western Culture I offers an excellent opportunity to explore the early history of the Christian faith, from its origins in the time of Christ through the Middle Ages. Our discussions of faith, mores, and values are some of the most rewarding activities we experience, both inside and outside the classroom.

Outside the classroom, I try to live my life in a way that students can look to me as an example of Christian love and servanthood. As a former Seaver dean once stated, “The students are always watching.” How true that is! I have encountered Seaver students all across the globe. Each meeting reminds me of the deep responsibility that I have to my students to be a beacon of Christian love, caring, and behavior. That responsibility does not end when a student completes a course, but it continues on long after graduation. I have had the great pleasure of creating life-long friendships with my students. Seeing my students go out into the world as educated, responsible individuals who can think critically and who possess a life-long love of learning is my greatest pleasure and reward.

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*Wayne L. Strom*  
*Professor of Applied Behavioral Science*  
*Graziadio School of Business and Management*

The broad field within which I teach is Human Behavior. The focus of my classes is on the *development of leaders* within organizational settings. I teach from theory,

contemporary science and pragmatic application. The intention is for each of my students to further develop and apply their own leadership potential.

My students are adults. They are all very 'bottom-line' and results oriented. I teach in two business school programs. One MBA program is designed for senior C-level executives. In these classes, almost all students are in their mid-40's or early 50's. The second MBA program is for working adults, usually lower to mid-level managers. In this program, the students tend to cluster between 30 and 35 years of age.

Drawing on contemporary neuroscience, my classes begin with attention to how the human brain and nervous system starts unfolding and developing from about six months after conception. We attend to how our brains establish patterns and how these patterns may enable or inhibit the shaping of leadership potential. We give special attention to how the neurocircuit patterns within the brain can be retrained. (The hard-science evidence for this at first tends to astound some students, many of whom have accepted the old notion that 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks.' The science is clear that adults with normal brain function can retrain neural pathways within the brain and 'learn new tricks.')

Within the classroom, I endeavor to involve both the linear and non-linear aspects of thinking and action. This comes in part from my personal experience as a challenged learner from elementary school through most of my undergraduate classes. I am convinced that pragmatic application of the subject matter gives strong support to the learning process.

Although I do not often discuss this in class, I am convinced that God has purpose in each of our lives. If I reflect back on my forty years as a Pepperdine Professor, my best teachers have been my students. With some, it is as if God sent them into my class so that I may learn from them. With others, like most students, they have come to learn.

I do not claim to know what God's purpose is in anyone else's life. It is evident to me that when executives and managers are highly effective, the lives of the families of their employees are directly impacted. Within my classes for senior executives we hold a dinner for spouses at the end of the trimester. Frequently a wife or husband will comment on how the changes in behavior of the student have had a positive impact on children and others in the home. From time to time I receive similar comments from an assistant or co-worker of one of my executive students.

I think the most important aspect of my personal philosophy of teaching is remembering that even with the most challenging student, God has purpose.