

**Statements of Teaching Philosophy  
by 2004-2005 Recipients**



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Listening, Watching, Wondering, and Hoping:  
A Teaching Philosophy

As a student, I trembled with fear when I approached the teacher's desk to submit an assignment. Having offered up my latest attempt to prove that I had something to say, I would return to my desk and wait . . . hoping my ideas would not be corrected and returned to me dripping with red ink. Eventually, I learned to censor my ideas and dutifully report on what I read in books and heard in classrooms. School became a place where my friends and I were judged. Teachers were the enemy and learning was a game of compliance: we finished assignments, followed rules, received grades, and marked time by bells.

Occasionally a teacher stepped from behind the desk and showed an interest in us. In the company of these teachers, we grappled with constructing our own understanding. Sometimes we resisted their invitation to learn and retreated to classes where other teachers told us what to think. Sometimes we froze with the prospect of thinking for ourselves. Sometimes we felt liberated. No matter how we responded to these teachers who knew our names and asked for our opinions, we each, in our own way, began to look at things as if they could be otherwise.

These teachers made space for us in their classrooms and set aside time for us to wonder. They reintroduced us to subjects we had learned to hate. They gave us advice without making us feel inferior. They challenged us with assignments that proved we were smart. They created safe spaces so we could make mistakes and ask questions without feeling ashamed. They inspired us to learn for ourselves. They listened to what we had to say and asked us questions we had not imagined. They watched what we did and challenged us to take risks. They tried to understand what we might learn next. Most importantly, they stepped into our lives and challenged us to imagine the future for ourselves.

School became a place where we imagined alternatives and reached beyond ourselves to engage in the process of constructing a different future than the one set before us. When these teachers refrained from lecturing and listened without interrupting, we began to hear our own voices and question our beliefs. When these teachers stepped away from the front of the room and watched without judging, we began to see ourselves and question who we were becoming. When these teachers refused to assume what we needed to learn and wondered what we might be ready to learn, we began to ask new questions and understand our own learning processes. While these teachers listened, watched, and wondered, we began learning.

These teachers put aside their egos and attended to what we were ready to learn. Free from the wrath of the red pen, we began to critique our own work. We invested in ourselves. These teachers did not tell us what to think. They presented us with problems and offered guidance while we worked towards solutions. They challenged us to explain ourselves and remain open to alternative views. They used structure to encourage creativity, and resisted the temptation to take control or push us towards predetermined objectives. They trusted us to breathe life into their lessons and challenged us when we refused to step forward. They let learning unfold and pushed us to take advantage of every opportunity. Their lessons responded to our needs and exposed us to ideas we had not considered. They created space where we felt free to take risks and make mistakes. They were accessible when we needed them and invisible when we did not.

These teachers had the courage to be themselves and the wisdom to know they could not teach us until we felt safe enough to be ourselves with them. They seemed to believe that if they listened carefully, and watched closely, then we would let them into our world where they might discover what we were waiting to learn. When we were anxious, they made us laugh. When we were frustrated, they showed us alternatives. When we felt inadequate, they offered encouragement. When we struggled, they inspired us to push forward. These teachers cared for us each day in their own way so we would care about ourselves and believe we had something to contribute.

These teachers seemed to appear when we needed them most. But I have a feeling they were always there, waiting in the background, hoping we would look up and ask for help. These teachers made themselves available to us. They let themselves be vulnerable. They cared more about what we needed to learn than what they had to teach. They were more interested in listening than talking. They had more questions than answers. They were always ready to learn from us; maybe that is why we learned so much from them.

Now that I am a teacher, I try to be present for my own students. I try to listen. I try to watch. I try to imagine what they are ready to learn. I do not want my students to be afraid of learning. I want them to believe in themselves. I want them to realize how much they mean to the people who know them. I want them to ask questions when they are confused. I want them to take risks when they feel inspired. More than anything else, I hope my students learn how to make their own lives extraordinary.

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*Jeanne M. Heffernan*  
*Assistant Professor of Political Science*  
*Seaver College*

Articulating a teaching philosophy, as I see it, involves theoretical and practical dimensions. To begin with the first, my own thinking builds upon two basic premises

concerning education. First, as Aristotle said so well, human beings are creatures who experience wonder; we desire to know and are only fulfilled if we have satisfied this desire. Education thus addresses a primary human need. The second premise extends the first: it is *good* that we pursue knowledge or, better, wisdom since in doing so we become fuller persons. This is why a liberal arts curriculum is so important to me, since it introduces the student to the wisdom found in the widest array of disciplines; it provides, as John Henry Newman would say, “a connected view of things” (*Idea of a University*, XLII), enabling us to evaluate ideas and events reflectively, not tossed about by the tides of intellectual fashion.

To my mind, this connected view of things becomes clearer and more coherent when Christian convictions inform the learning process. The truths of faith are a leaven enabling liberal education to rise to new heights. H. J. Massingham captures this well when he observes that “Modern knowledge is departmentalized, while the essence of culture is initiation into wholeness, so that all the divisions of knowledge are considered as the branches of one tree, the Tree of Life whose roots go deep into the earth and whose top is in heaven” (quoted in Wendell Berry, “The Loss of the University,” 82).

A teacher plays a critical role in this “initiation into wholeness.” If wholeness is the destination, I think the teacher is best likened to a guide—a traveler, like the students, on a search for the wholeness that comes from wisdom, but with more experience of the outlines of the path. She knows its particular crags and crevices, as well as its spectacular vistas. A good guide, her primary method is to let the path “speak for itself” and let her fellow travelers learn its twists and turns by experience. The path, of course, represents the field of knowledge she has mastered, and the landmarks along its way are the finest, most influential thinkers in its history. As Christopher Derrick observes, these persons are “the real teachers . . . the great minds of all time, with whom the student will make contact directly” (*Escape From Skepticism: Liberal Education as if Truth Mattered*, 38).

This view of education and the role of the teacher have shaped my own classroom work. On my best days, I approach teaching as it truly is, namely, a vocation—truly a high calling to cultivate the humanity of my students. Second, and more practically, I try to be a good guide on the path to wisdom by introducing my students to the most important thinkers in the field. So, even in introductory classes, I assign primary sources so that the students might take up the great conversation about politics with the finest interlocutors. I see myself primarily as a facilitator of this exchange. But this exchange is broader than the encounter between the students and the texts. It includes the interaction of all parties in the classroom. In this vein, I encourage a discourse with my students and among them and incorporate some degree of seminar-style interaction even in large lecture classes. These discussions are often wide-ranging, touching upon the deepest questions. This is deliberate, since I view teaching at a Christian university a privilege that allows me to address the widest range of concerns. I seek to incorporate faith into the course material by posing theologically informed questions to my students and exposing them to the insights of Christian intellectual traditions.

In teaching political theory, for instance, I integrate faith and learning by challenging students to penetrate the heart of a thinker's anthropology and by inviting them to assess its adequacy in light of religious wisdom. Bringing the theological perspective into play expands the parameters of the discussion in fruitful ways. For instance, last semester after reading Aristotle's very compelling account of happiness in Book I of the *Ethics*, I presented a quite different view taken from the reflections of an American Jesuit missionary to Russia, Walter Ciszek, who had spent over twenty years in Soviet prison on account of his convictions. As the students and I puzzled over the two accounts, I realized that incorporating a distinctly Christian perspective into the discussion had leavened the loaf, had made it rise to higher dimensions—the dimensions of the soul, suffering, and eternal life—that would not have been reached otherwise.

Finally, following the axiom of a great teacher—"Unless you can articulate it, you don't know it"—I design my courses to highlight written argument and oral communication. Even my large introductory classes include two or three short papers and one final paper, in addition to tests and quizzes, while my upper-division classes focus even more intensively upon writing and speaking. All in all, this seems to be an effective way to encourage in the students a genuine grasp of the material.

In sum, as I see it, the teacher's role in higher education consists primarily in fostering the intellectual development of her students first by introducing them to important ideas, texts, and events, and second by requiring them to articulate what they've learned from the engagement. This role is even richer in a Christian university, as the teacher can ask the deepest questions and appeal to the most profound sources of religious wisdom. Approaching life and learning through a dedication to the liberal arts enlightened by faith provides the surest initiation into wholeness I have experienced. It is a privilege to be a part of it.

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*William G. Larson*  
*Professor of Business Law*  
*Graziadio School of Business and Management*

It is a great honor to be recognized as one of the recipients of The Howard A. White Award for Teaching Excellence.

My appreciation is especially deep because I took my first graduate level class from Dr. White. This was at the old South L.A. campus in 1964. I had just graduated from the University of New Mexico and frankly, was floundering a bit. Howard took me under his wing and encouraged me to build upon my education. He also made a point of going out of his way to greet and ensure that I was a welcomed member of the campus community.

Howard was there for me when I later became an adjunct faculty member in 1977 and again gave celebration with his winning smile and handshake in 1981 when I became a full-time faculty member at GSBM. We had many warm conversations throughout my journey in academe that continued through his time as president of the University. In short, he was a friend, mentor, a source of unwavering encouragement and a very personal inspiration.

I will not attempt to compare myself to Howard White, but will address the published criteria for the Howard A. White Teaching Award.

- ◆ Although I have from the very beginning of my relationship with Pepperdine University been involved in administrative roles, it is teaching that has been my greatest passion. It was Dr. White who first gave me, as a graduate student in his class, the “assignment” to lecture on a couple of topics. That was the beginning, and the road has since taken me on a most wondrous journey.

The focus of my teaching and scholarship has primarily been directed to the legal and regulatory environment’s historic, current and future impact on society in general and business in particular. However, after surviving the teaching of my first graduate level class at GSBM (it was SBM then), I resolved to never again be textbook driven. From that point, I have made my students principals to the class process, research and content, and have made “change” an integral component. As part of that commitment, innovation and creativity have been central to my teaching methodology. As a result, course content shifts substantially every trimester to address, among others, current legal, ethical, political and regulatory issues as they impact society and the necessary response of business to those challenges.

In summary, the courses I have designed and taught are unencumbered by pre-conceived study guides and static cases. Certainly they start with a proper syllabus and will always include black letter law and concepts as they apply to business, but each trimester uniquely builds its own platform as to what is also included in the experience. Central to the theme and methodology is breaking free of artificial constraints so as to address “real world” cases, statutes, political influences and the domestic and global circumstance in a way that is uniquely relevant to adult business students.

- ◆ In many ways the working adult students have had more than an equal share in developing my teaching methodology and course content. Their input, both during class and through the formal critique process completed at the end of every trimester, coupled with their shared research involvement and direct participation, is in truth the cornerstone of class design. Because students are so intimately involved in course structure, content and delivery, the responsibility is for them stimulating, creative, intellectually challenging and most definitely scholastically rigorous.

As a consequence of relationships that naturally develop, counseling of students on a full range of academic and personal matters becomes a central commitment. I believe, however, that I have received far more from them than I have given.

- ◆ I was the first full-time business law professor at GSBM and it has been a true privilege to serve as a mentor to scores of teaching colleagues throughout my career. Indeed, the classes I have designed at GSBM have been models for the other business law professors to follow, but I have tried to exercise care to not divert them from building upon their own independent strengths and confidence.
- ◆ Though I have served in administrative leadership that includes positions of Department Chair, Committee Chair, Faculty Representative, Division Chair, Program Director, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and as Interim Dean of GSBM, teaching remained my passion. Indeed, it has always been with relish that I was able to periodically reassume full teaching duties. Especially gratifying was the recognition by GSBM peers in awarding me The John Nicks Award for Teaching and Service, which in itself symbolizes the interdependency of teaching and service.
- ◆ It is common knowledge that teaching and administrative duties are all consuming, yet I believe that it is also important to make time for broader community and academic involvements. For me those have included scholarly papers at academic conferences as well as published articles in both academic proceedings and journals; many years of service on the Board of Directors of a WASC accredited University; service as an adult teacher for church programs; lecturer for The Sunday Forum in Orange County; featured speaker at Arthritis Foundation Conferences; featured speaker on KNWZ radio; featured speaker at “Time of Your Life Expo” at the Los Angeles Convention Center; featured regular speaker for KIEV radio; and most recently a finalist/nominee for the Business Man of the Year Award by the Los Angeles Business Journal. The point of this is that it is possible and indeed there is the responsibility to be actively engaged beyond the classroom and campus not only to share in broadest terms the message of our University Mission, but to draw strength and relevance from that contact.

It is my belief that excellence in teaching includes not only honed presentation skills and good academic citizenship, but must also allow for students, colleagues, school administrators, as well as civic and business leaders to participate in the nurturing process which ultimately results in the enriched scholarship of both student and professor.

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*Ted V. McAllister*  
*Edward L. Gaylord Chair*  
*Associate Professor of Public Policy*  
*School Of Public Policy*

Inquiry and meaning:

I like to think of my classes as invitations to inquiry. In small seminars this is a fairly natural form of teaching. Seminars are really about entering into existing conversations. The books or readings that form the basis for a classroom conversation are really expressions or voices in a much larger conversation, often extending over centuries or civilizations. Participants in a seminar have the great advantage of working with the ideas of people who have reflected deeply on the questions or problems. These reflections emerge out of a dialectic between universal problems and particular contexts. Seminar participants become aware of the problem as such (universal) but they also have to deal with the rootedness of the human who seeks answers (particular). Such a conversation, complete with rich “outside” sources, becomes an event that cannot be predetermined or staged—a predetermined end is inconsistent with the concept of a conversation.

A teacher has a number of important roles to play in such a class. In my estimation, nothing is more important than forcing students to use language precisely, to reorder conceptual taxonomies, to use precise words to signify subtle distinctions. In this way the teacher is providing students with the ability to “see” what was once invisible and thereby supplying the tools for students to engage meaningfully with the ideas. Unwilling to accept old categories or stock language, the students and teacher are capable of reopening questions and thinking through them afresh. As a new, more differentiated language emerges from this dialectical conversation, the class constructs a linguistic matrix to understand and investigate the issues. It is important to me that while the teacher very much shapes the creation of this framework that the teacher not impose it. He ought to persuade students that their existing categories are inadequate and then ask for them to help construct better ones. The class, in this way, helps create the very means of analysis that will govern the collective inquiry. If the problems are worthy of investigation and the sources are sufficiently rich, no two seminars will have the same conversation.

In seminars, as I’ve described them, the inquiry privileges rigorous attention to language and to the clash of ideas in the pursuit of more persuasive answers or expressions of the problem. Lecture courses have a different—though not radically different—dynamic and objective. In lectures I seek to accomplish two goals. First I want students to become conversant with information and dominant or competing interpretations of information. They should know, for instance, what historians tend to say about the causes of the Civil War. In most lectures I present students with evidence and some range of perspectives about how to understand this evidence. Second, I lecture to work out a problem—to

think about a historical, philosophical, policy conundrum before them. In this way I begin with evidence as conventionally understood and try to work out what conclusion this evidence is likely to produce. I like to ask questions of the students to see how they have understood this fact or that interpretation. When a student has offered a reasonably distinct idea, I try to examine it in public. I seek to sort it out relative to conventional wisdom. But more important still, I seek to explore before them what it would “mean,” in a larger context, to accept this interpretation over a competing one. So, even as I lecture to my students I aspire to come to ever clearer and distinct ideas, to adjust my interpretations in light of conversation—sometimes conversations I have with myself in front of my students.

In all these ways I emphasize the questioning and the open-ended inquiry. In some measure these teaching objectives issue from foundational premises that I take very seriously and that emerge out of my own experiences. The most important premise related to my teaching is that humans are so constituted as to be questioners. It is in our nature to ask the questions that can never be resolved fully with any culturally conditioned expression of an answer or of truth. Humans, as social and political beings, live among others, in a culture that they have been given by those long since dead. Out of these conditions humans are charged with a peculiar task—to find meaning as individuals and as communities. Meaning emerges out of this discovery and it emerges out of community. No abstract thinker can exist, as humans need society to provide the cultural means to understand self and society. The universal problems, the conundrums that are human as such, have no expression except in the context of a specific cultural idiom that both empowers us to articulate meaning and restricts the range of those expressions of meaning. The search for truth, for answers to enduring or temporary problems, the conversation within a community about purposes mundane and divine—this search for truth is a constitutive element in finding human meaning.

#### Becoming Young Again:

In frustration one day I declared to my students that they may have become too old and that my job was to make them young again. Even as I said this I sensed that this idea had occupied some corner of my mind for some time. I later tracked it down to a reference from G.K. Chesterton. But in context it exposed much about why I teach and why it is so important to me. My students typically enter my classes with a sense that they had already thought about the basic questions and they were now in search of skills to employ in the marketplace. Consequently, they were not disposed to take the most fundamental inquiries seriously. They had become old. They had become accustomed to speaking of some abstract “real world” (by which they didn’t really mean “real” so much as existing) and then contrasting it with alternative “idealistic” or “theoretical” worlds. Politics, they assert, is about power and manipulation, not about persuasion and the search for the good. Alas, insofar as we waste time on these idealistic elements we hamper our efforts to change meaningfully the world—efforts that require narrow skills.

To be young intellectually is to experience surprise and wonder. If I have one larger goal with my students at the School of Public Policy, it is to give them the chance of seeing

things afresh and of being surprised by an idea. What happens to the soul and mind of person who can think about first principles, who can ask in innocence the most basic questions of human purpose? I argued to my students that a person with skills but who lacks the ability to see ever afresh the most basic issues of human political existence becomes a slave or servant to a system that one can neither control nor comprehend. Freedom comes from a mind that is open enough to “see” other possibilities rather than the ones dictated by some reified “real world.” To educate students to freedom is to prepare them to engage in a conversation with other humans, to deliberate within a community of meaning, about the things that most matter. To be free in this sense means to be free to change one’s mind, to be surprised, to be young.

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*Marilyn Misch*  
*Assistant Professor of Accounting*  
*Seaver of College*

I approach the task of describing my goals and teaching philosophy with some trepidation, because the most direct statement sounds very pretentious: My overall goal is to make a positive difference in the lives of my students. To accomplish this goal, I try, through advising, counseling, mentoring, and instruction, to evidence the characteristics of Christian service, integrity, and commitment to excellence that we want our students to adopt, and to make sure that students know that I care about them as individuals. My basic teaching philosophy is to set high standards for my students, and then to do everything in my power to help my students meet those standards.

In the classroom, I teach subjects that are fairly technical and that often are perceived as boring by people outside my disciplines; thus, one of my first challenges is to make the material interesting to students who are unsure of their ability to succeed and who generally are enrolling in the classes out of compulsion, rather than out of a deep desire to learn accounting and/or international finance. I try to engage the students by learning all of their names the first day, by encouraging discussion, by relating the material to their interests and experiences, by bringing in real-world examples, by using humor (including remarkably bad puns), and by sharing my genuine love and enthusiasm for the subjects. I also provide prompt feedback—returning all tests and papers the next class, and taking the first ten minutes of my accounting classes to quickly examine each student’s homework. This homework review not only encourages students to do the work, but also allows me to interact with each student, individually, for a brief time before class, and to modify my lecture to focus on items needing clarification.

One of my favorite lectures is the first one in introductory financial accounting. After briefly describing the four primary financial statements, I bring out bags of candy and have students establish a candy company and take roles as investors, managers, salesmen, and customers. After spending a few minutes buying and selling candy, we prepare

financial statements for the company based on the transactions that have taken place, and then the students get to eat the candy. This exercise introduces the accounting framework in a non-threatening way, and makes the class seem “doable.” On average, approximately 10% of the beginning students decide to become accounting majors or minors after taking my class.

Although I try to make all of my classes as fun and interesting as possible, my classes are rarely described as “easy.” (The average rating for difficulty is generally 4.5 or above on the 5-point scale used in the student evaluations.) Grade point averages usually range from 2.3 to 2.8, and students know that “A’s” truly are earned through outstanding performance. All of my tests include comprehensive questions that require students to integrate knowledge, and all of my classes require extensive writing. The Financial Accounting, Intermediate Accounting I, and International Finance classes include group projects which require collection, interpretation, and analysis of real-world financial information. The project that I developed for my Financial Accounting class in 1997 is now employed in all Pepperdine introductory accounting classes, and the projects that I developed for the other two classes have been published in academic journals. In addition, my newest intermediate accounting project was presented at the American Accounting Association annual conference last year, and the paper related to that project has received a “revise and resubmit” from one of the top accounting journals. The major goals for all of my projects are to develop students’ critical thinking, analytical, and communication skills, while deepening the students’ understanding of the business issues involved, and strengthening the students’ confidence in their own data-interpretation abilities. I encourage students to set up appointments to discuss drafts of their papers, and I generally spend 30 to 40 hours outside of class each semester meeting with groups to discuss their projects and to help students improve their writing skills.

Along with spending time reviewing drafts and answering questions about classroom material, I try to be available to my students every weekday during the semester to discuss any other issues of concern. I am typically in my office from 7:30 in the morning until 6:00 in the evening, with time out for classes, Convocation, and lunch. I am the official advisor for more than 75 accounting, business, and international business students, and I chair or serve on the advisory committees for approximately 15 contract majors in finance. In a typical year, I help approximately 25 students develop four-year academic plans that will allow them to participate in international programs and still graduate on time, and I help approximately 30 students with résumé and cover letter preparation. In addition, I serve as the faculty liaison to the accounting firms and businesses that recruit our students, and I am the advisor for the Pepperdine Accounting Society.

While I enjoy discussing accounting and finance, and it is wonderful to share in the moment when a student suddenly understands an elusive concept, my greatest satisfaction as a professor comes outside the academic arena, when I am able to comfort a student who is struggling with a personal issue, or to rejoice with a student who has just received a job offer, or to pray with a student who is looking for answers to questions more important than those relating to financial statements or changes in exchange rates. My

overriding goal, both inside and outside the classroom, is to build relationships with my students that enable those other moments to occur.

I came to Pepperdine in 1980 as a Jewish student whose only real goals in coming were to receive an excellent academic education and to get a good job when I graduated. While I was here, two professors, Farrell Gean and Jere Yates, shared their knowledge, their time, their lives, and their faith with me. As a result, when I graduated in 1983, I had not only a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and a job at one of the top accounting firms in the world, but also a desire to become a professor myself, and, most importantly, a two-month old commitment to Christ. I don't know if I will ever have the sort of impact on my students that Farrell and Jere had on me, but I know that I want to do so. In the long run, I want my students to learn accounting and finance, but much more than that, I want them to like themselves, to know that I care about them, and to experience the great joy of loving, and knowing that they are loved by, God.

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*Robin Perrin*  
*Professor of Sociology*  
*and Blanche E. Seaver Professor of Social Science*  
*Seaver College*

As a teacher I am often asked about my teaching philosophy: "What is the secret to being a good teacher?" As if I would know the answer to that question - ha! The truth is that after over 15 years of teaching I continue to "discover" and "rediscover" my teaching philosophy. Below, I identify several commitments/goals/strengths. I am not quite sure what to call these characteristics of my teaching, although I do believe that these commitments effectively illustrate what I think is most important in the classroom.

*Commitment to Students*

No doubt every good teacher must be committed to students. For me this commitment means that I try to treat students with respect and loving concern. I truly enjoy my students and I want the best for them. I believe, furthermore, that they understand and appreciate this about me. Importantly, I believe that teachers who do not genuinely care about their students cannot be effective teachers. At a place like Pepperdine, of course, these commitments take on added meaning. It is at the center of what we do.

Ten years down the road my students are not likely to remember specifics about the content of my courses. I hope, however, that they remember me. I hope and pray that they will remember me as a person of Christian character who took an interest in their lives. If this is how they remember me, I believe they will remember me as a "good teacher."

### *Challenge Students*

Although I struggle with exactly what this means, my belief is that most students, especially good students, want to be challenged. I am confident that high expectations bring out the best in students. The more demanding the class, the more the students will learn and the more respect they will have for me, for the discipline of sociology, and for Pepperdine University. My goal is to be demanding, but fair.

### *Be organized, prepared, and conscientious*

Students appreciate knowing that there is a plan for completing the course content. Students also appreciate a professor who works hard.

### *Be approachable in class and outside of class*

I think this is accomplished, in part, when one takes an interest in students. I also think it is important to avoid the arrogance with which professors sometimes approach students. Students who are intimidated by the teacher's stature and status will find it difficult to ask questions in class or visit the professor's office. I think it is easy for professors to take themselves too seriously.

In the classroom, I try to create a safe, open, "fun" atmosphere. There is nothing wrong with taking a few minutes at the start of class to get to know the students and for them to get to know me. Plus, a little humor never hurts! I think this style of interaction sets a tone that is conducive to learning. I especially see this in a class like Introductory Statistics. Because this class, in particular, can sometimes be intimidating to students it is important to create a climate of trust and openness. Students need to feel like they can ask questions and approach me in my office.

### *Love what you are doing*

When I first started teaching I remember worrying about what it would be like to teach the same courses over and over again. Today, 17 years later, I still love what I do. I love my discipline, and I love the classes I teach.<sup>1</sup> While I do spend a fair amount of time doing research and writing, I consider myself, first and foremost, a teacher. This is my identity. Since I truly believe what I am teaching is important, and I feel called by God to be a teacher, it is easy for me to be enthusiastic. Also, I am fortunate to teach a discipline that is always changing. My classes today are not like they were 15 years ago. Given my dynamic subject matter it is easy to stay enthusiastic.

### *Encourage conceptual understanding and critical thinking*

There was a time when I was mostly concerned with filling heads with information. I was at my best, I thought, when I cranked out the "facts" and they wrote frantically. Over time my perspective has changed. Today, my goal in all of my classes is to cultivate in my students critical thinking and a "sociological imagination." To be sure, there are times when information (often via lecture) is important. But I am increasingly convinced that over time they may well forget the "facts." The "sociological imagination" they will not forget.

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<sup>1</sup> I teach Introduction to Sociology, Introductory Statistic, Sociology of Religion, Deviant Behavior and Social Control, and Senior Seminar

In conclusion, to the degree that I am a successful teacher, I believe, it is because I am dedicated to my students, dedicated to my discipline, energetic, organized, and conscientious. I believe students recognize that I love to teach and that I love them. I cannot imagine doing anything else.

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*Daryl M. Rowe*  
*Professor of Psychology*  
*Graduate School of Education and Psychology*

I have attempted to combine my philosophical approaches to both clinical training and teaching as it is the nexus of these two standpoints that best captures my overall approach to my work here at Pepperdine University – I am not simply a teacher, I have the responsibility to train students to function effectively as scholar-practitioners – I have to teach students to *know* what to do when they don't know *what* to do.

With almost twenty years experience as a practicing counseling psychologist, I have had an opportunity to develop some very clear ideas about the mark of good clinicians. I see these features reflected indelibly in both my therapeutic approach and style, and my approach to clinical training/teaching.

First, I believe good clinicians must possess an articulated conception of optimal human functioning - they must have clear ideas about their goals and the outcomes of their connections with persons in distress. They must also be able to communicate those goals to clients in comprehensible, non-technical terms so clients can decide whether the goals are consistent with their own (the client's) values. These are issues I try to emphasize to students through routinely having them organize their approaches to treatment.

Second, I believe good clinicians must possess a clinical "presence" - a blend of acumen, insight, judgment, style and sensitivity, tempered by experience, which conveys a fundamental respect for the value and worth of humans within the context of their various group memberships. Good clinicians understand that clients are simultaneously members of various interlocking social networks that provide meaning to their behavior. Good clinicians respect and value those various networks, through which clients realize their meaningfulness. Thus, I stress to my students the necessity of examining the resonance between a person's individual experiences and the contexts out of which s/he emerges.

Third, good clinicians must possess an extensive repertoire of ideas, strategies and styles to attend to and connect with people experiencing a range of distressing human dilemmas. Since clients are people reflecting a broad range of interlocking social networks, clinicians must have a variety of strategies accessible to increase the chances

for effective treatment. I attempt to instill within my students a multi-faceted perspective from which they view themselves and others. I try to place the reality of human variation at the center of my work with students.

Fourth, good clinicians must possess the ethical integrity to refrain from taking advantage of clients' trust and vulnerability. Clarity regarding one's role and functions is essential. I seek to impress upon my students that they learn to inspire change, not manipulate people to change. Far too often, students become easily seduced by what they know/are learning and thus fail to sustain sufficient humility in the application of their emerging skills.

Lastly, good clinicians are not bounded by established theory and technique but maintain a level of creativity and rigor to continuously seek to expand both the number and quality of available treatment options for a particular client or set of clients, with distinctive issues, in various contexts. The nature of human distress is limitless, so good clinicians must continually seek to bring forth different methods to intervene.

My experiences with appropriating existing clinical theories and techniques to render them more useful for underserved populations, both practically and theoretically, have had the most critical impact on my insight into and understanding of clinical intervention. It is my belief that unless we, as clinicians and scholars, systematically examine the processes for working with all humans, our understanding of any human behavior and the delineation of effective approaches will remain hampered.

These broad clinical values translate into the classroom in the following ways. A core belief of mine is that people belong, have meaning and purpose and thus, require respect. Students entrust their hope and intellectual development to teachers for guidance and insight and I believe it is essential that I value who they are and what they have to say. I must respect and value them. This valuing of humans is consistent with my philosophy of teaching, which presumes the importance of becoming involved with students; and building strong relationships through which students might experience respect and challenge. In order to encourage that involvement, I believe it is necessary to meet students directly as they share diverse expressions of ideas, concepts and perspectives regarding their learning by challenging them to critically engage themselves in promoting intellectual growth. For me, a safe learning environment is one where ideas flow freely and there are no such things as stupid questions.

A second characteristic of my teaching style is an emphasis on encouraging progressive intellectual growth. In other words, I try to incorporate a developmental process in my classes. I attempt to shape my students' learning by incrementally increasing my expectations throughout the duration of the course. Thus, students are able to acclimate to my teaching style and incorporate my expectations for their performance in a way that reinforces their continued active engagement in the class. Additionally, I attempt to be over-prepared, so that I have the flexibility to guide students to seek the questions to which they desire answers.

Finally, since I believe that all behavior occurs in context, I attempt, as much as possible, to include structured group-centered learning experiences. These experiences are usually in the form of group projects and/or presentations; because I believe that what ultimately makes the academy a unique learning environment is the opportunity to facilitate peer-to-peer learning. It has been my experience that when students work together on projects, they tend to learn the information to a deeper level and are often stimulated to learn at a broader level as well.

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*Susan P. Salas*  
*Associate Professor of Telecommunications*  
*Seaver College*

It is very gratifying for me to be a part of a telecommunications program that not only academically challenges the student in the classroom, but develops service, purpose and leadership through television production application. I began a new career teaching at Pepperdine University in the Telecommunications Major after twenty years in the television and film industry wearing various hats. The totality of varied experiences in the industry gave me the opportunity to work and learn from many talented and diverse people. Not only do I bring my professional working experience to the classroom, but also find myself drawing from life experience in general and sharing with my students personal insights about responsibility and accountability.

I find a great deal of personal reward in sharing and emphasizing to my students “real world” possibilities. Innately in harmony with the faculty commonality of Seaver College, I invite an inquisitive spirit dedicated to the pursuit of academic excellence. I encourage students to develop an ethical standard to take into the broadcast industry by modeling my own Christian values. Specifically, I promote creative experimentation coupled with moral/ethical obligation and professional commitment in order to prepare students for the realities of the broadcast workplace. In essence, I structure the classroom as a professional mirror image of such a workplace. Therefore, I require my students to approach every project, be it a studio exercise or program to be broadcast, with the element of reality always in play. This approach not only challenges the student, but also expands the possibilities of creativity. Personally, I am also challenged by this approach as I find the classroom a constant source of inspiration, productivity, and professional validation.

My teaching methodology is straightforward and uncomplicated. On the introductory first day of class, I describe my role in the classroom as instructor, facilitator, resource consultant, coach, and counselor. As an instructor, I am the academic guide conveying to the student procedural steps and required information necessary to understand the course objectives and my teaching goals. I am also the facilitator/conduit, in that the

information must be understood not only in theory, but also through application. The resource consultant role takes the facilitator's role one step further and shepherds the student socratically to research and comprehend the answers to questions presented upon application. The mentor/coach role is manifested to students with my passion and love for excellence, talent, and learning. Thus, preparing and infusing students with necessary confidence to gainfully search their future employment opportunities in our ever expanding world of telecommunications. As the student's counselor, I am there to advise and direct their talents and abilities to best educate and train them for entry-level positions in the telecommunication workforce, so they can define their career goals and diligently realize such goals.

Service Learning has been an integral component of two production classes I have taught at Pepperdine for the past ten years. In TC 370 (Advanced Audio and Video Production) and TC 470 (Advanced Narrative Video Short Production) students are required to produce a Public Service Announcement (PSA) for an on-campus organization or non-profit agency outside the University, which airs on TV 26 and KWVS, our campus radio station. Additionally, for the past two academic years, students in TC 370 and TC 470 have participated with me in a high school IT mentoring program. As part of the course work, Pepperdine students mentor high school juniors from the Conejo Valley School District while participating in TC 370 and TC 470 production projects. Mentoring high school students and producing PSAs for non-profit organizations help Telecommunication Majors develop leadership skills and the importance of service to community as well.

Teaching at Pepperdine University in the Telecommunication Major has given me the opportunity to contribute to an academically challenging and rewarding program that promotes a complete education through hands-on instruction, leadership experience, and learning through service.

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*Peter T. Wendel*  
*Professor of Law*  
*School of Law*

When I first interviewed at Pepperdine twelve years ago, Dean Ron Phillips told me that the Law School had accumulated one of the best 'teaching' faculties in the country. I wondered how one could make such a claim, but nevertheless I was impressed that a law school cared enough about teaching that it would make the claim. In fact, the law school's emphasis on classroom teaching was one of the principal reasons I accepted Pepperdine's offer to join the faculty. Since joining the faculty, I have come to agree with Dean Phillips' assertion. I think that the School of Law has one of, if not *the*, best teaching faculty in the country, and I say that after having had the privilege of visiting at

several different well-known law schools, including UCLA, Loyola, and Washington University in St. Louis. I have always been very well received by the students when I have taught at other law schools. But while I consider myself a “good” teacher, I honestly believe that many of my colleagues here at the law school are as good, if not better, than I. Knowing that the Pepperdine Law School is blessed with so many excellent classroom teachers makes the honor of being selected as a finalist for the Howard A. White Teaching Award all the more special and meaningful.

My teaching philosophy is multi-faceted. First and foremost, it is student centered, both inside and outside of the classroom. As Dean Charles Nelson said just the other day, the primary responsibility of a university is to educate its students. Moreover, I believe that the goal is to educate the whole person, not just the law student; to educate the student not just in the rules of law, but in how to think like a lawyer, in how to act like a professional, in how to treat other people, in how to be a good person. I accept that challenge and responsibility.

I think it is important for a teacher to create the proper environment for learning. This environment can be created on several levels. At the macro level, it is important to create a sense of community where the students respect each other and show tolerance to each other. On the first day of my Property class, I take time to talk to my students about how we are a de facto family – how during the first year of law school they will spend more of their waking hours with their classmates in their section than they will with anyone else in their lives. I talk to them about how we can be a functional family or a dysfunctional family, and that it is up to them. I talk about what it means to be a functional family, and why it is better to be a functional family. As teachers, I believe that we can play an important role in setting the tone within the section by setting forth the appropriate expectations as to how we expect students to treat each other inside and outside of the classroom, and I can exemplify those expectations by how I treat the students, both inside and outside of the classroom.

At the micro level, I try to create a classroom environment where students are comfortable expressing their thoughts, their ideas, and their questions, and where students are encouraged to think critically and creatively. I put students on notice as to my expectations that they are to take an active role in the learning process by telling them on the first day of class that my teaching philosophy is: “It is not my job to teach you, it is your job to teach me.” I also tell them that to the extent it is my job to teach them anything, it is not my job to teach them Property, Wills & Trusts, or whatever the name of the course may be; rather it is my job to teach them “how to think like a lawyer.” I use the rules of Property or Wills & Trusts to teach them those skills. In thinking about the law, I challenge my students to think on three planes simultaneously – the factual plane, the rule plane, and the public policy plan.

I use what I call the ‘benevolent Socratic’ approach in the classroom. I come into class with an idea of where I want to start the class and where I want to end the class, but no real idea of how we are going to get there – that is up to the students. I begin the class with a question, and where the discussion goes depends upon the students’ answers. The

discussion moves quickly, students have to stay on their toes; they have to pay close attention to the debate, to be prepared to express their thoughts and ideas and to defend those thoughts and ideas. I emphasize to the students the importance of listening to each other. I listen very, very carefully not only to what the students say, but how they say it. I play off of the words students use in their answers in formulating the next question. I develop themes around the words students use. The students quickly realize that I genuinely care about what they say and how they say it. The students quickly realize that they, collectively and individually, are the center of the dialogue, not I. They quickly realize that the benevolent Socratic approach empowers them as students, that they control the classroom discussion. This feeling of empowerment creates an incentive for the students to work harder both inside and outside the classroom.

During the classroom discussion, I make comments that go to both the substance of the material that we are covering and the methodology of the analytical process. Invariably some first year student will come to me about a month or two into the first semester and tell me that while he or she was intimidated at first by the Socratic approach, that he or she enjoys it now and is starting the master the process of ‘thinking like a lawyer’ because he or she can answer most of the questions I ask in class. I always smile and tell the student that is great, but the key to beginning to ‘think like a lawyer’ is not whether the student can answer the questions I ask, but whether the student can ask the question in their own mind before I ask it in class. Only then, when the students have incorporated the Socratic dialogue into their own analytical process, have they begun to think like a lawyer – and that is the ultimate goal of my teaching philosophy.

I believe that it is important for me to be passionate about my teaching and about the material I am teaching. If I can not get excited about the material, how can I expect my students to get excited about the material? And my goal is not just that my students will *know* the material, I want them to *understand* the material.

I encourage my student to continue the learning process outside of the classroom. I often try to structure the classroom discussion so that we end not with closure, but by raising a new issue that forces the students to reassess what they thought they had learned. My hope is that the discussion that I start in the classroom will continue in the atrium or the cafeteria. But just as I hope and expect that the student’s learning process is not limited to the classroom, I believe that the teaching process is not limited to the classroom. I tell my students that I have an open door policy to office hours and that they are free to stop by whenever they want to talk about the material, law school, or life in general. No matter what project I am working on, if a student stops by my office, I put the project aside to help the student. Just last week a student stopped by my office and began the discussion by asking questions about the material we had covered in class and ended the discussion by telling me that her younger brother was having trouble with his faith, that he was asking her tough questions about her faith, and she asked me for advice on how best to help him. As a professor I accept and enjoy the multiple roles that we play in the lives of our students – teacher, role model, and/or mentor. Law school is a life altering experience, and some students make the transition easier than others. For those who

encounter difficulties, be they academic, personal or spiritual, we need to be there to provide support and guidance during those difficult times.

I believe that teaching is a partnership, a partnership between the institution and the students, a partnership between the faculty and the students, and a partnership that I enter into with each student in each of my classes. If a student does poorly, I feel that I have failed in part, because that student's performance is a reflection, in part, of my performance. I tell the students that I am prepared to work just as hard, if not harder, than they are to make sure that the partnership is a success. And this partnership does not end with the class, or even with graduation. I work with students throughout the law school process on academic support issues, with students I have never taught in class. Recently I received an e-mail from the student President of BALSAs asking me if I would make a presentation to their student organization and meet with each student to go over exam taking techniques and exam writing techniques. If they think I can help them, I am happy to work with them to try to make a difference. I want the students to think that the law school process is a partnership, because in the end, as an institution we need our alumni to think that way about Pepperdine – that they are partners with Pepperdine who have an on-going vested interest in the partnership; that they have a duty to continue to contribute to the partnership by sharing their time, their talents, and their resources (particularly their financial resources) with the institution and its current students. If we build and convey to the students that sense of partnership while they are students, they will be lifelong partners. As professors, we are on the front line of forming that partnership with our students for the benefit of the Law School and the University. As professors, we have to see and accept our role in that partnership.

My teaching philosophy is multi-faceted because I believe the Pepperdine wants its faculty to play many roles in the lives of its students. I am grateful that Pepperdine encourages its faculty to play all these roles, for in the end, I believe that it enriches all of us, the students, the faculty, and the institution, academically, personally, and spiritually.

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