

**Statements of Teaching Philosophy  
by 2015 Recipients**



***Ken Ko***

*Graduate School of Business and Management*

***June Schmieder-Ramirez***

*Graduate School of Education and Psychology*

***Steven Schultz***

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***Don Hancock***

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***Brian Newman***

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## ***Ken Ko***

*Associate Professor of Decision Sciences*

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It is a tremendous honor for me to receive the Howard A. White Award for teaching excellence! Being a professor is the best job I have ever had. This is mainly because being a professor affords me the privilege and opportunity to teach. I have a passion for teaching. Of course, being a professor is more than being a teacher. Yet, for me, teaching is the most important aspect of being a professor, and certainly what I feel most called to. In the movie *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell says that when he runs he “feels God’s pleasure.” In a similar way, when I teach I “feel God’s pleasure.” I feel pleasure as I experience the dynamic interaction between my students and me, as I impart extremely useful knowledge to students, as I help students to understand and see the “light bulbs” turn on, and as I build relationships with my students.

My teaching philosophy can be captured by “4 Cs” that I need to do:

### **Connect**

I need to connect well with my students. The more connected I am to the students, the more active and engaged they will be. I connect with them through being personable and bringing great energy to the classroom. I need to be actively engaged before I can expect my students to be. Another way that I connect with my students is through caring for them. They need to know that I care not only for their educations, but also for their lives as a whole. Creating and developing interpersonal connections provides the right classroom atmosphere for learning.

### **Coach**

I need to take on the role of being a good coach. I like sports and the metaphor of teaching as coaching has served my students and I well over the years. I make it clear to my students that we are on the same team because we share the objectives of learning the material well and enjoying the learning process. When my students understand that I am on their side, this creates a positive environment and gives my students a greater chance to “win” – to learn. Furthermore, as their “coach,” I try to help stretch or improve my students thinking ability through the way I teach them. Related to this, I try to ask questions and assign problems that force my students to apply the material they already know in new ways or combine two or more things they have learned at the same time. The greater their thinking ability, the higher likelihood of their ability to solve the new and complex problems that they will encounter in the business world.

### **Communicate**

I need to effectively communicate the course material to my students. This involves me not only being an expert in the course material, but also communicating it as clearly as possible. My field

of management science is not easy for all people to understand, so I need to do my best to make it understandable to all of my students. Furthermore, I need to communicate the relevancy and impact of the course material to the real world. When the students can see how the information they are learning has made and can make a huge difference in improving companies and society at large, this helps the material come alive for them and motivates them to learn that much more.

### **Convey**

I need to convey my passion for the subject matter. Passion is not taught, but caught. I cannot expect my students to be excited about the course unless I am REALLY excited about it. If I can convey my passion about the material to my students and they themselves become passionate about it, then this can create an electric environment for learning. My being passionate about the material helps inspire my students to learn.

Thank you for this great award! I thank God for giving me the privilege of being a teacher. I hope and pray that He will use my teaching to positively impact students as I continue my career here at Pepperdine.

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*June Schmider-Ramirez*

*Professor in the Education Division*

*Graduate School of Education and Psychology*

**"The value of a man resides in what he gives and not in what he is capable of receiving." -**

**Albert Einstein**

**"Teaching should be such that what is offered is perceived as a valuable gift and not as a hard duty." - Albert Einstein**

**"The secret to creativity is knowing how to hide your sources." - Albert Einstein**

**"Great spirits have always found violent opposition from mediocre minds. The latter cannot understand it when a [person] does not thoughtlessly submit to hereditary prejudices but honestly and courageously uses their intelligence." - Albert Einstein**

**"We are in the position of a little child entering a huge library filled with books in many different languages. The child knows someone must have written those books. It does not know how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. The child dimly suspects a mysterious order in the arrangement of the books but doesn't know what it is. That, it seems to me, is the attitude of even the most intelligent human being toward God. We see a universe marvelously arranged and obeying certain laws, but only dimly understand these laws. Our limited minds cannot grasp the mysterious force that moves the constellations." - Albert Einstein**

On my first day of teaching, a student named Trevor stood up and spoke directly to me: "I really have work at home to do; I am leaving." With that he ran out of the room, out the front door of the school building and down the half block to his home.

I was horrified and quickly made sure he was safe and made arrangements with his parents about his future schooling. However, this five year old in my first kindergarten class at Franklin-McKinley Elementary School near San Jose California made a tremendous impression upon my future teaching. What I learned was: **"There needs to be a reason to learn in the mind of a student in order to ignite the passion which will take them further in the learning process."**

The following will be some notes on a teaching philosophy which will include a section on 1) My thoughts on the role of a teacher 2) My interest in the international/global space of doctoral teaching and 3) Faith, Values and Learning

**Role of a Professor:** I was fascinated with the stories of how guides lead their charges up the trails to Mt. Everest. The guide makes sure that his/her hikers have adequate provisions, have the tools to stay on the trail, and have the ability to stay on the trail even though there are blizzards and many unforeseeable occurrences.

I am always supportive of students and realize many of them do not have the experience of reading through many journals in the field. In the area of global leadership and change, I bring my own experiences to class. I have developed an inventory called the Schmieder Global Mindset Inventory (SGMI) which assesses where students are in acquiring an outlook toward global issues. I am very much a student-centered teacher—mostly of doctoral students. I spend many hours with students, but I feel that I have learned more from them than they do from me. I publish the Global Leadership Journal and hold a Global Leadership Conference in Belize, ([www.icglconferences.com](http://www.icglconferences.com)), every July.

**2) My interest in the international/global aspect of policy:** As part of our doctoral instruction in the Ed.D. and future Ph.D. we provide immersion trips to countries such as China, Belize, Argentina and Chile. We have included these trips in the curriculum because we feel that students should have a global mindset. This mindset is important because of the increased importance of international business. We have a “Fast Pitch Belize” where students select a company and present ways to help that company utilizing macro and microeconomic theory.

**3) Faith, Values and Learning:** I feel very strongly that one must have a spiritual focus in their life. The Bible was an essential book in my youth. Both of my grandfathers were ministers. I studied the Bible several days a week and was brought up in a religious household. In *Building Catholic Higher Education*, by Smith and Cavadini, it states that universities should be the home of “human thought, experience and belief.” The open table as described by “A White Paper Presented to the Religious Standards Committee, Dec. 9, 2014), characterized by charity, humility and diversity.

I feel strongly in enabling students’ learning about social justice, social entrepreneurship, and the importance of having strong ethical values. I believe in the importance of humility and the spiritual life, (John 13: 13-14).

In conclusion, the great leader embodies qualities of the conceptual, the technical and the interpersonal. I have followed theorists like Kolb, Knowles and Boyer. I hope that my students will embody all three qualities—and that students like “Trevor” have absorbed the love of learning as I have absorbed the love of teaching. I am honored to be a Howard A.White Teaching Excellence Award Winner. (By the way, I wonder about Trevor; I heard he became the billionaire owner of a dot com company.... He found his passion.....I did too-teaching.....)

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***Steve Schultz***  
*Assistant Professor of Law*  
*School of Law*

I am honored to receive the prestigious Howard A. White Award for Teaching Excellence. I have been fortunate to have three fulfilling careers in my professional life, but teaching at Pepperdine is easily my favorite. To receive an award for doing what I love is the icing on top of a very tasty cake. At the same time, to receive an award named for President White is humbling. My colleague and friend Tom Bost has told me a good deal about President White and, to do justice to an award in President White's name, I feel even more compelled to give my best effort each and every time I enter the classroom. While some classes will go better than others, to honor President White, I pledge to continue working as hard as I can to be a better teacher.

I am a bit embarrassed to describe my teaching philosophy. I am surrounded by amazing teachers, and it is overwhelming to think others might find my views worthy of consideration. That being said, I am privileged to share my views with you.

I wish I could articulate a crisp statement which poetically captures my teaching philosophy, but I cannot. Instead, my teaching style and attitudes are a composite of the specific precepts outlined below. That being said, I think all of my teaching precepts reflect what I have repeatedly written to prospective students in connection with the law school's admissions efforts: "*You* are the most important reason we teach – for me, nothing is more rewarding about my work than interacting with my students." While it may sound generic and simplistic, to me, successful teaching occurs when the students are well served. The specific precepts which guide my efforts to best serve our students are as follows.

**Endeavoring To Challenge Students**

Our students are very smart. While they are motivated to perform well in the traditional sense, by earning good grades, they also want to be challenged in class. Even more importantly, I believe they want to be held accountable – to be called out when they are not performing well and to be acknowledged when they are performing well. From the first class each semester, I try to set the tone that I will hold all of them accountable. To promote that objective, I study picture rosters so that I know their names the first day and can call on them individually without resorting to a seating chart. I also actively use the Socratic method without providing advance warning of who I will be calling on in a given class. That way, all students are on call in every class.

While being called on without warning is stressful for many students, lawyers are put on the spot on a daily basis. At the same time, I understand the discomfort of a student who is answering a series of questions in front of a large class of his or her peers, and I detested the practice of some of my law professors, who seemingly used the Socratic method as a sport, sticking with a student for an entire class period while rarely (if ever) confirming whether students' answers were correct. In my opinion, students simply do not learn in such an environment. As a result, I employ what I call "a kinder, gentler Socratic method." So that no one is made to feel the spotlight is focused particularly on him or her, I do not stick with any student for an extended period of time. (This also enables students to take adequate notes.) Additionally, I do not see the purpose of "hiding the ball." If students are correct, I tell them so. I certainly do not spoon feed information to students, but I also do not want them leaving class uncertain about the purpose of a given class. In short, I want them to understand the material, but I want them to get

there through their own active learning – I try to be a guide rather than a lecturer. Frankly, that is much more challenging and fun for me as well.

### **Endeavoring To Make The Material Relevant**

I have been very fortunate to teach subjects I love. Over the years, I have taught each of the following courses on multiple occasions: Employment Law; Remedies; California Civil Procedure; Legal Research and Writing (the introductory writing course for first-year students); and Advanced Litigation Writing (an upper-division writing course I created). As someone who practiced law for many years, I believe that all the courses I teach are important for aspiring lawyers. At the same time, I recognize that law students may not understand why the material is important. I also understand that they think some (perhaps much) of the material is not inherently interesting. I take this head on. If the material is dry, I readily admit it and even laugh about it, but I explain why it is relevant, particularly in terms of their development as aspiring lawyers.

In writing courses, I try to give assignments which will simulate what they would be expected to produce in practice. For example, in the Advanced Litigation Writing course, students draft a series of litigation documents within the context of a hypothetical case. In this way, students come away with a portfolio of useful litigation documents while learning how and when the documents fit into a case. In substantive courses, I try to infuse exercises which reinforce what attorneys do in “real life.” For example, in Employment Law (my former area of practice), I assign full cases rather than a casebook of edited cases. As a result, in addition to learning the substantive law rules, students become more efficient at reading cases. Further, they hone their analytical skills by parsing for themselves the relevant portions of a case from those portions which are not germane to the issues we are studying. By using whole cases, I am also able to show students important aspects of cases which casebooks ignore, including how the procedural posture of a case influences the development and application of the substantive rules. Further, using whole cases allows me to explore with students various practical aspects of a case, including how long it took to litigate the case, the cost of the litigation, litigation strategies, and ethical questions. I supplement these practical discussions by showing students actual documents I drafted in practice, endeavoring to bring to life what attorneys actually do in practice.

In all my writing courses, I provide students with extensive feedback even if it means providing them with critical feedback they are unaccustomed to receiving. Moreover, my feedback is the “old school” variety, extensive comments in red pen. I was fortunate to work for many years with the international law firm of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher and I tell students that, although I thought I was pretty good writer before I joined the firm, I quickly realized that I was sadly mistaken. However, I saw my writing gradually and dramatically improve as a result of receiving the same type of elaborate feedback I give my students. Indeed, in time, I was the one reviewing others’ work and, as I tell my students, I am simply applying to them the same level of scrutiny I received and applied in practice. By treating students as though they are associates in a law firm, my goal is to educate them on the high standards on which they will be judged as practicing attorneys. Students seem to appreciate being held to such a high standard and it is more meaningful to them in the long run than receiving generalized feedback.

In my substantive courses, I give assignments and exams which fundamentally test the skill of applying legal rules to an elaborate fact pattern. While this may sound like what all law school exams do, my exams differ from most exams in a couple of ways. As an initial matter, because practicing attorneys generally analyze defined issues, I do not give students “issue spotting” essay exams with a large number of issues. Rather, on essay exams, I ask them to analyze a limited number of identified issues. This necessarily tests whether students are able to differentiate legal concepts. (I use the multiple-choice section of an exam for overall course coverage.) Because I am testing a limited number of issues, I am often able to require students to analyze excerpts from the very types of documents they would be

expected to analyze in a real case, such as a workplace handbook, an independent contractor agreement, and a performance evaluation. This forces students to find the facts for themselves, an important skill for practicing attorneys.

I am by no means presuming to suggest that my method of testing students is the best method. Rather, it is the method which works best for me and for the objectives I set for my courses. In each of my courses, I try to simulate, in every part of the class, what practicing attorneys do. It seems to work for my courses.

### **Endeavoring To Be Myself**

As my approach to exams suggests, I always try to be myself. For example, in class, I try to infuse “real life” stories from my practice, including telling humorous, self-deprecating stories to illustrate that everyone makes mistakes. As another example, because I know that students are often intimidated to visit faculty offices, I make a habit of “meeting them on their turf” by walking around the library and cafeteria to check in on them. Indeed, I routinely “walk the library” before I go home each night. Invariably, my informal visits with students prompt questions and thoughtful discussions which otherwise might not occur. In short, at all times, in whatever way I can, I always try to put students at ease. I think this fosters an environment in which students can truly learn.

That Pepperdine University and the School of Law give me the freedom to me by myself is something for which I am very grateful. For that reason, I am able to honestly write to admitted students, “I love it here and cannot imagine teaching anywhere else.”

### **Endeavoring To Set An Example By Working Hard**

Lawyers work hard. Because I have always believed that those around me are smarter, I have always felt that I need to work harder than everyone else to be successful. Thus, I want students to see that I demand hard work from myself, not just from them. This hard work takes many forms, including providing elaborate comments on student papers, drafting fresh assignments, and creating innovative teaching materials. Additionally, I work extremely long hours because my class preparation work must be subordinated to making myself available to meet with students. As I frequently tell students, “I work for you.” I believe that at my core. Students pay large sums of money to attend school here and they deserve to have my attention when it is convenient for them, not only when it is convenient for me. Thus, it is not uncommon for me to be in the office early in the morning, late at night, and on weekends.

### **Endeavoring To Mentor Students**

I have heard several people say that we have a moral obligation to help develop our students for life after law school. I believe in that view wholeheartedly. Thus, I believe it is my personal responsibility to mentor students regarding law school issues, extracurricular activities, externships, summer jobs, and postgraduate jobs. As a result, I counsel students on a wide range of issues, including class schedules, extracurricular opportunities, and potential jobs. More concretely, I work with students in drafting whatever documents they need in applying for externships and jobs, including resumes, cover letters, and the like. Because I emphasize to students the need to personalize these documents to tell a story, I necessarily have to spend considerable time learning about each student. While this is an immensely time-consuming function, it enables me to get to know my students even better, which enhances my overall experience as a teacher.

In closing, I want to again express my gratitude for being awarded the distinguished Howard A. White Award for Teaching Excellence. I feel unworthy of such an honor, but I intend to do all I can to live up to it.

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***Don Hancock***  
*Professor of Mathematics*  
*Seaver College*

Permit me to begin by sharing a short story from my teaching infancy. While an inexperienced teaching assistant at the University of California Santa Barbara, I had the opportunity to substitute-teach several large calculus classes for Professor Max Weiss, one of the finest mathematics teachers I have ever known. At the end of the semester, he let me read all of his teaching evaluations, because several students had commented on my teaching as his replacement. This simple gesture on his part truly helped my development as a teacher, but not for the reason he had expected. Happily, the student comments concerning my teaching were mostly complimentary, but what impacted me most was reading the views about Professor Weiss. Indeed, although most evaluators thought he was outstanding, I was shocked to find that some students felt he was terrible. I took away from this two obvious but useful lessons: first, no matter how well you teach, you cannot please everybody; second, even an outstanding teacher may not be effective with every student. To the latter point, this is one reason why I strongly believe having teachers with diverse teaching styles and philosophies greatly strengthens a college; we should not all be doing the same things in our classrooms. These simple lessons were liberating, allowing me to confidently develop and refine teaching methods that optimize my particular talents, while keeping me from becoming too distraught if (despite my genuine best efforts) some students are not particularly pleased.

In the rest of this statement, I will reflect on my teaching philosophy, strategies, and experience. As I analyze my teaching of mathematics, I find much to agree with in the words of Alan Schoenfeld, noted Professor of Mathematics Education at U.C. Berkeley and an expert on teaching problem-solving, who wrote in the February 2012 issue of *Notices of the American Mathematical Society*:

“the first moral imperative of mathematics instruction is that mathematics must be seen, and taught, as an act of sense-making. Students must be led to see that mathematics is not arbitrary but natural and inevitable – and that they can, with the right experiences, come to grips with it in ways that provide powerful tools for thinking.”

I also agree with Professor Schoenfeld when, in the same paper, he goes on to say that (at least up through the undergraduate curriculum) “mathematics can be seen as a set of sensible answers to a set of reasonable questions,” and that students should experience it as such “so they come to see mathematics as a domain that not only makes sense, but that they can make sense of.” In my teaching, there is much attention to asking probing questions and getting students to see how and why the mathematics being considered fits together the way it does, which also helps expose the beauty of the subject. My goal is for students to

come to appreciate that by understanding the mathematics they are being taught (rather than trying to treat it as a collection of arbitrary rules to be memorized and applied mechanically) they can more easily retain, apply, and build on what they learn.

Just as in sports, where two coaches can achieve equal success using widely incongruent styles, two instructors can be equally effective even though their teaching strategies and philosophies might be very dissimilar. Although I have experimented with a number of different teaching strategies during my 35 years of teaching at Pepperdine, I still firmly believe that in mathematics an *active* lecture format works best for me and my students. By an *active* lecture format, I mean one where the learning is lecture driven; classroom discussion and interaction is encouraged and expected, as opposed to students being simply passive listeners. I try to adeptly handle student responses to my questions, whether they are correct or incorrect, fostering the development of a positive classroom environment that is inviting and facilitates student learning. One of my strengths is in understanding the nuances of where my students are in their learning process, and then being able to quickly adjust the classroom discussion on the fly to better meet their needs. Analogous to a musical jam-session, where there is both an underlying melody along with improvisation, the melody of my classes is oftentimes provided by a lecture outline or example worksheet, but there is plenty of improvisation in the form of alternate explanations, pictures, questions, and examples. I also try to keep my lectures lively, in part through my sincere enthusiasm, sense of humor, and informal chatty style.

Students also enjoy and benefit from the numerous connections and analogies I draw between mathematics and common life experiences. Here are four examples to illustrate, out of virtually an endless supply of possibilities: (i) in a beginning calculus class, the relationship between a car's odometer, speedometer, and tachometer is linked to the relationship between a function and its first two derivatives; (ii) in linear algebra, student experience with walls, floors, and ceilings in a building is tied to the nature of solutions of systems of linear equations; (iii) in a business math class, the connection between the purchase price of an extended warranty for a computer is made to the expected value of a discrete random variable; (iv) in a real analysis class, two different ways of determining the total value of a bowl of coins is compared to the difference between the Riemann and Lebesgue integral of a function. I try to take as much of the fear and mystery out of learning mathematics as possible, and build on student intuition and experience. Especially in my upper division courses, I also try to model the perspective and thought processes of a mathematician that I want students to learn.

Some features of my teaching that I am especially proud of include: being meticulously prepared for class every single day, always motivating a new topic and connecting it to previous and future ideas, being able to identify the truly important concepts and giving students the "big picture," being able to extract questions and conjectures from students, and being able to help students relate more complex ideas to simpler ideas and their personal experiences. As a result, even though I have high standards, students who are willing to make an effort frequently say that I make mathematics seem easier and more beautiful than they thought it ever could be. Of course, not all students appreciate high standards, preferring instead to get high grades with little effort or learning; however, I tell

my students that they deserve and should demand high (but reasonable) expectations, and that they can achieve the course goals through hard work along with my help.

In my upper division courses, lecture handouts are given to each student several times a week as a classroom supplement. In part, these materials allow students to spend more class time thinking and answering questions I pose, and much less time passively copying down copious amounts of material from the board. (I also prepare lecture guides, or at the very least problem worksheets, for almost all of the courses I teach. However, experience has shown me that sketchier outlines tend to be more effective for the less rigorous and larger lower division courses.) In my opinion, there is nothing more boring in upper division courses - for me or my students - than copying down precise mathematical definitions, theorems, and overly refined textbook style proofs, but with my lecture guides there is no need to. Instead, the outlines free us to focus in class on what is more important and interesting--motivating a mathematical concept and observing connections with previous knowledge and working examples, showing why a result is plausible and certain hypotheses are necessary, and then determining an appropriate proof (with a "picture" and preliminary outline or "scratchwork," whenever possible). During class, I display the relevant pages from the lecture guide on a screen using a document camera, and (with student input) write down missing pictures, proofs, conjectures, questions, and other details on the white boards. The handouts help keep the students much more engaged and the classroom atmosphere relaxed; moreover, class time is used more efficiently and productively. Furthermore, the notes introduce several topics not found in the textbook. Students know that the notes in no way replace being in class, but rather make class time more useful and aid them in reading the text.

By the end of all my courses, as the students complete a rigorous and comprehensive final exam, it is gratifying to see how much they have progressed. As indirect evidence of student learning in my upper division courses, I regularly have former students who inform me (through campus visits or emails, for example) that my classes helped prepare them to be successful in graduate school or in their careers. Indeed, some former students who have been very complimentary to me are ones that were not top students, but after some reflection have come to recognize the value of what they learned and my genuine interest in their development.

I am humbled that many students (including non-majors) have commented favorably on the teacher evaluation forms as to my enthusiasm, knowledge of course content, helpfulness, and ability to make mathematics interesting and understandable to them. Students also appreciate that my classes are extremely well-organized, the tests and assignments are fair and promptly graded, the lectures and class materials are clear, and that I try to get to know them and treat them with the care and respect they deserve. Although I have a friendly personality by nature and have always gotten along well with students, in the last decade I have made an even more concerted effort to get to know them better. (For example, I regularly "dine with a student," and use this as an opportunity to talk about not just academics, but more commonly about life issues and Christian faith.) I genuinely am concerned about the development of my students and love teaching them mathematics, and

I believe it shows. As a familiar adage claims, students have to know that you care before they care what you know.

Finally, in order to improve my teaching effectiveness and help keep my skills current, every year I read many journal articles and attend numerous conference talks, special sessions, or workshops devoted to teaching undergraduate mathematics. These activities provide me with concrete ideas concerning new topics to add to the curriculum, how to better teach some existing topics, how to design and evaluate new assessment strategies, how to increase student motivation and engagement in the classroom, how to more effectively use technology as a teaching tool, and how to improve interactions with students.

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***Brian Newman***

*Associate Professor of Political Science  
Seaver College*

I teach with three goals in mind: to stir up a love of learning and truth, to convey the knowledge base necessary to understand political phenomena, and to help students think and communicate better—more comprehensively and clearly, with greater sensitivity and wisdom. I will forgo a deep discussion of all the literary, philosophical, and spiritual roots of these goals and just say that it seems to me that learning, communicating, and laughing comprise a big part of the good life.

I try to meet these goals through four overlapping means. First, I hold students to a high standard and work to help them meet it. The first day of every semester, I tell students that my goal is for them to reach the next level intellectually and that I will hold them to the standard of that next level. I also say that my job is to help them to attain that next level. I try to do this by providing prompt and thorough feedback on written work, explaining in concrete steps how to improve, taking time in class to explain how to achieve the next level, and being available and approachable for help (I aim to get exams back the next class and papers back within a week so the feedback is hopefully fresh enough to help, though I sometimes miss that goal).

Second, I strive to help students connect with the material. I aim to present material in an organized, interactive, and varied way. I often prepare PowerPoint presentations that help me organize information and present it with visual cues. I then make the presentation available online, which frees students to listen in class rather than having to scramble to write everything down. I rely heavily on discussion and use games, simulations, small group projects, current events, guest speakers, and video clips to give life to key concepts. Discovering what will help students connect with course material is a puzzle for each semester and student. I rely on informal conversations (e.g., asking was that clip helpful? Should I show it next time I teach the course?), quick feedback methods (e.g., asking students to write down the “murkiest point” from the day at the end of class), and mid-semester evaluations to guide my efforts to communicate with each particular class.

Third, I structure course material and assignments to help students learn the material and develop critical thinking skills. Each of my political science courses is structured around big questions (e.g., how does the U.S. political system create “winners” and “losers”, that is, how do various parts of the system advantage some people and disadvantage others? How effectively do elections make office holders responsive to the public?). I aim course readings, discussions, and assignments at working toward answers to those big questions. Thus, I emphasize arguments—claims about answers—doing everything I can to get students to understand and assess the logic of scholars’, politicians’, and their fellow students’ arguments. I design class discussion and papers to teach students to summarize and evaluate others’ arguments as well as crafting their own. We learn to identify an argument’s key elements, to interrogate the argument to determine its strength, and ultimately to assess whether a claim is persuasive. As I see it, understanding, evaluating,

and making arguments are not only fundamental skills for academic and professional success, they are necessary for living in a democratic society, where political processes consist of making, understanding, and evaluating arguments (or just yelling on talk shows).

Fourth, for better or worse, I share myself with my students. To challenge and encourage students requires a personal connection and even trust. Getting to know students is of course the great joy of teaching. In small classes I try to have at least one conversation about something other than politics with every student before the semester's end. When I teach in Elkins I try to learn as many names as possible and talk to different students before and after class or on campus. These conversations remind me that every student has a story—not just of the “I spent the night in the ER with my brother and when I got back my printer was broken” variety, but a story of the dramatic, hopeful, painful, and joyful type characteristic of human beings. In bits and pieces, I share some of my story. Part of this means sharing my family by inviting students into our home or telling quick stories of our daily life with four young children.

I also share my love for our subject. I share my research to demonstrate the thrill of discovery and the often messy process of wrestling with questions and testing proposed answers. We share a semester of time together, four months of news about campaigns, elections, recessions, military interventions, new legislation, court cases, scandals, government shutdowns, Ebola outbreaks, racially charged deaths, school shootings, Arab Springs, questions, answers, and issues. As we encounter the world together, students can see how I react to and learn from new events, and how I contextualize, analyze, and connect them to the work of our course.

Sometimes, to my delight, we meet these goals. The first day of my GE American People and Politics course, I ask students what they want to learn in this course that someone else is making them take. Inevitably, someone says “I don't really know much about politics, but I want to understand it” (there is usually a collective nod of agreement and relief after this admission of ignorance). When, at the semester's end, students tell me they now can have conversations about politics “and actually understand what's going on,” the late nights are worthwhile. When students send me a link to a news article excitedly telling me they thought of our class while reading, it's enough to propel me through that ominous stack of papers awaiting my attention.

Sometimes, of course, my efforts fall flat. That new game turned out to be more confusing than enlightening, or that cool new example generated only puzzled or blank looks, (and wasn't cool either) or worse, the exam was too long to finish in class. On such occasions, all I can do is own the flop, admit to students that it didn't work, try to laugh at myself, do what I can to fix it, and hope we all learn a little from the mistake.

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## *Darren Good*

*Assistant Professor of Applied Behavioral Science*

*Graduate School of Business and Management*

I am deeply humbled to receive a Howard A. White Teaching Excellence Award. I see my role of instructor as providing an opportunity to encourage students toward crafting careers that have meaning (as defined by them). I constantly strive to know who my students are and ask questions to uncover their dreams for the future. In several of my courses I deliver one-on-one coaching as a way to experience employee development, but also as a way to build a safe space from which to explore extraordinary alternative realities for careers. I believe we learn most effectively when material is filtered through an articulation of what matters most to us. Every course I teach contains assignments that are meant to engage students in deep reflection about meaning and purpose. My belief is that organizations filled with actors who find meaning in what they do will create conditions for others to explore what they find meaning in.

I strive to create learning spaces in which playfulness incites positive emotions. I leverage the notion that positive emotions expand our momentary thought-action repertoires, freeing us up to think in new ways and see from multiple perspectives (Fredrickson, 1998). I take the mindset that serious play is not only possible, but also enhances learning (Statler, Loizos and Jacobs, 2009). I contribute to this climate by approaching learning as an exciting activity that should be fun. In class I seek to weave a humorous tapestry between the stories told, experiences in the room, and the theories presented. This blend of learning and playing unleashes greater creativity. I wish to widen the possibility of choice, freeing students to engage in serious play (if they so choose, as not all do). I make humor an explicit aim with students at the beginning of the semester and soon they begin to engage with others and myself in a similar way. I see this approach as achieving learning objectives while fostering in many, a new appreciation for learning environments. To compliment this, I view career and organizational life as serious endeavors that are best pursued with a similar sense of enjoyment and enthusiasm.

I believe self-development is linked to vulnerability. Yet as instructors and students, we often seek to perform (as in a performance orientation), finding creative ways to avoid areas of vulnerability. Learning requires some discomfort and exposure of the parts of us we deem to be clumsy. I encourage students to love the parts of oneself to which they struggle the most. I try to model this by exposing my own struggles in the moment as they become “live” for me. Regardless of the subject, I hold the phenomenological experience of students as the vital reality with which to build dialogue from. I want to know how each individual is reacting in the moment, creating greater contact – i.e. the emotional experience that students make with the material and each other. When helpful and appropriate, I attempt to name and report my reaction(s) to what is happening in the live classroom experience, serving as a model for the rest of the class. By encouraging a deeper awareness of what is happening in the classroom, I hope to make raw experience more intriguing as a learning mode. This ultimately becomes a form of learning that one can take away from the educative environment and use in the real world of management – noticing more astutely the happenings of events and the people who enact them.

## **References**

Statler, M., Heracleous, L., & Jacobs, C. (2011). Serious play as a practice of paradox. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 47, 236-256.

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