

A Brief Statement of My Teaching Philosophy

Ed.'s note: From time to time we publish teaching philosophy statements (usually shortened versions). Our goal is to encourage all of us to revisit the reasons why and the purposes behind our daily actions in the classroom. Michael Glaser shares his philosophy in a handout he distributes early in the course. He goes a step further when he spells out the implications of his philosophy for students.

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I am committed to the liberal arts ideal that education should familiarize students with the intellectual, spiritual, artistic, and scientific traditions that women and men have turned to in order to better understand their lives and their world.

I believe it is important to be curious about and alert to the interrelationships among the various things we study, see, hear, and think about; the lives we lead; the

world we live in and; those who share this world with us. Doing so, as openly as possible, enables us to pursue together the questions that are evoked by Socrates' statement that "the unexamined life is not worth living."

I hope that my classes and interactions with students will serve to help each of us come closer to achieving a personally exciting connection with the kinds of knowledge, skills and habits of the mind that help one to meaningfully and joyfully live the "examined life."

I share with others the notion that "an educated human being is one who combines skepticism with reverence, who will question everything but the dignity and worth of others" and who recognizes the importance of serving the larger community.

[I have borrowed this quotation as well as some other phrases/ideas from the Sarah Lawrence College catalog, to which I am indebted.]

Thus, I encourage you . . .

- to be actively engaged in your learning by bringing to bear on your education your own interests, skills, passions, and potential as keys to your involvement with the subject matter of this course
- to take both intellectual and creative risks
- to actively engage with me and the other students in this course to create a classroom environment that promotes respect, meaningful dialogue and trust
- to keep in mind that what you gain from this course depends on your effort and involvement. As much as I wish for each of you to succeed, my role is necessarily limited to that of facilitator, encourager, guide and cheerleader.

I look forward to our time together. 🍀

Providing Notes: A Research Update

Some previous research (highlighted at various time in the newsletter) has reported that providing students with instructor-prepared notes improves their performance in class. More specifically, research has documented the value of providing partial notes so that students still must record some of the material for themselves. Some of this research has been criticized because of its experimental context — students were not using the notes across an entire semester in a course they were taking for credit.

This study (reference below) attempted to verify previous findings by testing the impact of notes on grades and attendance in a bona fide course — in fact in 11 sections of the same course. The researchers tested notes under three different conditions: 1) where the student generated their

own notes, 2) where the instructor provided partial notes, and 3) where the instructor provided full notes.

Based on previous research, they hypothesized that students provided with partial notes would have the highest grades and those provided full notes would have the lowest attendance. Surprisingly, results failed to confirm either of these hypotheses. No statistically significant differences in grades or attendance emerged.

On a survey completed at the end of the semester, 72 percent of the students reported that they did download instructor-provided notes before the lecture, but about 60 percent of them failed to review them before hearing the in-class presentation. Between 23 percent and 40 percent of the students (the percentage ranged across the three conditions) reported not

studying until the night before the exam. On average these students missed between nine and 10 class sessions.

These less-than-positive results may in part be explained by the 54 different majors reported by students in this required, entry-level psychology course. But then required courses make up a significant part of the learning experience in college, which still leaves us to wonder and worry about the results.

Reference: Vandehey, M. A., Marsh, C. M., and Diekhoff, G. M. (2005). Providing students with instructors' notes: Problems with reading, studying, and attendance. *Teaching of Psychology*, 32 (1), 49-52. 🍀

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