

L. Hawkins – Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy gradually has evolved into a handful of core principles.

Encourage curiosity. Curiosity is the basic motivation behind science. Youngsters ask endless questions. By the teen years, enthusiasm for discovery often declines. My goal is to reawaken that curiosity; asking questions is what scientists do! Classes are grounded in history to illustrate that ideas change through time, often as changing technologies allow testing of new hypotheses. Games, simulations, scenarios, and hands-on activities make abstract ideas and processes tangible. We link course content to daily life, current news and issues, government policies, and global concerns.

Clearly define the ground rules; set high expectations. My courses are clear in structure and expectations: WYSISWYG. Expectations for attendance, preparation, and participant apply to all of us.

Respect the individual; be inclusive. Many assignments allow students choice of topics. Surveys of interests and skills let me assign topics for individuals or groups while giving students a sense of ownership. I learn about the shifting enthusiasms and anxieties of incoming students while advising in NSO (formerly FTCAP). I work to improve my effectiveness as an instructor both online and in person. Training in online teaching and universal design directly resulted in recent course improvements aimed at improving access to materials and providing alternative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of topics. Creating quality educational resources online broadens access for learners with different abilities, learning styles, and locations.

Facilitate development of learners. Introductory classes include bonus activities to aid student transition to college (time management, using a text, and iStudy modules). BIOL 110, 220W, and 240W are designed with a ladder sequence of activities. Current topic assignments in each course ask students to select and report in writing or orally on news articles related to the class and personal interests. BIOL 110 includes a theme for reading and discussion, starting with newspaper articles and working up to technical literature. This year's theme is Lyme disease; prior years included the human microbiome, cancer, biodiversity, genetic engineering, and influenza. In BIOL 220W, a supplemental book is the basis for reflective essays and collaborative research projects. Last spring, we read *The Hungry Planet* by Schuman and D'Arey; prior classes included *The Evolution Explosion: How Humans Cause Rapid Evolutionary Change* by Palumbi, *An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* by McNeill, *Global Warming* by Houghton, and *Silent Spring* by Carson. BIOL 240W furthers expository and research skills. BIOL 434 and BIOL 461 include independent research and assignments requiring more advanced written and/or oral presentations and intellectual leadership.

Demonstrate the joy of learning. My students bring diverse backgrounds, interests, skills, and learning styles to Penn State Mont Alto. My goal is to improve some aspect of each course every time I offer it. In addition to changes in content or presentation, I gradually have increased the range of learning tools available in ANGEL or now, in Canvas. I have authored quizzes, crossword, word search and hangman puzzles, audio/text files as reading primers, and discussion guides. I continue to invite students to join me in pedagogical experiments. Last year in BIOL 110, a new biodiversity photo project was adopted enthusiastically; our Yammer group was the busiest in PSU (see Gosalvez E.21 Oct 2014. Use of Yammer creates enthusiasm among Biodiversity students - <http://tlt.psu.edu/2014/10/21/use-of-yammer-creates-enthusiasm-among-biodiversity-students/>).

Students engage intellectually and rise to challenges when classes connect to their daily lives and aspirations. I encourage us to have fun, to work hard, and to learn from one another.