

## Statement of Teaching Philosophy

*At the core of my teaching philosophy lies the belief that teaching and learning inform each other and that effective teaching depends on successful communication between instructor and learner.* Successful communication promotes student-centered learning, transmission of clear learning objectives and assessment strategies, and direct interaction and mentorship. My teaching philosophy is based on observing outstanding teachers, on six years of autonomous teaching experience, and on my theoretical background in the scholarship of teaching and learning gained as an instructional consultant. I have taught a wide range of courses and while their content has varied considerably, my dedication to close student-instructor interaction and my emphasis on active involvement apply to all classrooms.

*Teaching needs to attend to the different strengths of students while taking into account that learning is an active process that requires students' investment and involvement in class as well as outside of class.* Instructors need to draw learners into the material and provide a range of opportunities for students to engage with the subject matter, to reflect on it, and to apply their knowledge. The notion of a diverse group of learners in terms of different skills, talents, and backgrounds is reflected in my teaching style and material as well as in my forms of assessment. Challenging and diverse activities that engage students in various ways not only motivate students' participation but also consider and foster the different intelligences of learners (H. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences). Based on my approach to teaching and learning, I have implemented student portfolios as a form of student-centered learning and assessment in my classes. While many learners are unfamiliar with the idea of developing a portfolio and reflecting on their own learning throughout the semester, this assignment has received much positive feedback from students as it allows them to develop and strengthen their own interests, to apply their knowledge, and to extend their learning outside the classroom. In addition, reviewing each others' portfolios in class allows students to share their findings and experiences, to profit from each other's understanding of the material, from the exchange of knowledge and perspectives, and from the creative engagement with the subject matter.

*An inviting classroom climate is crucial for active participation.* In my classroom, a typical lesson begins with a short warm-up period during which students have to interact with a partner or a small group and talk (in the target language) either about a specified question or about their own ideas and questions. This warm-up transitions students into the (foreign language) classroom and sets the tone for active involvement during the class period. Most classes include a short lecture that highlights important aspects of any given class. The majority of the time, however, is dedicated to small group work and activities that help students practice vocabulary or new structures, discuss questions, engage with the material, and develop their own ideas. In students' ratings of teaching effectiveness their statements often reflect my approach to teaching. One student describes a Business Communication class as "an active learning

experience.” Students in German III state that the class had “interactive activities that helped us learn” and provided “fun and creative ways of learning.”

*A key element of the interconnectedness of teaching and learning relies on feedback from the instructor as well as from students.* Gathering student feedback in form of mid-semester course evaluations has been beneficial in my classes because it allows students to provide constructive input and to comment on their concerns. For example, based on students’ feedback, I have re-arranged the seating and changed the way I use the online course management system to connect homework assignments with in-class discussions. As an instructor, I do my best to provide immediate feedback that comments on students’ progress and performance. Offering timely feedback as well as formative and summative forms of assessment that encourage students to refer back to and reflect on their work, create an atmosphere in which students develop a different sense of responsibility for their work. A positive and encouraging classroom atmosphere that supports students to “take a risk” presents a basic prerequisite for foreign language instruction but also applies to classes that require student-centered discussion. The quality of instructor-student interaction further contributes to an inclusive classroom environment, and frequent communication with students in form of feedback as well as in form of mentoring increases the level of comfort and quality of interaction.

Ultimately, I strive to encourage my students to become independent and critical learners who value the process of learning as a life-long commitment. By creating an environment that stimulates communication, respectful interaction, and critical reflection upon beliefs and actions, I hope to contribute to students’ ability and enthusiasm to engage with differing opinions and beliefs and to become active members of the community.