

## Teaching Philosophy for Mark A. Brennan

I have dedicated my teaching career to two crucial aspirations: 1) breaking down the unnecessary barriers that block positive student and faculty scholarly interactions, and; 2) instilling a passion for the true wonder of the art and craft of rigorous scholarship and inquiry.

**In pursuing my first aspiration, I continuously seek new ways to engage, interact, and learn alongside my students.** All too often the distance that grows between faculty and students is massive and often, insurmountable. I seek to create space where together we interact as co-learners and co-creators of knowledge. I am dedicated to facilitating a highly interactive student-centered approach to teaching. I do this through a highly interactive and personable environment where I create space for informal personal interaction before and after class, have an open-door policy, am active in student organizations, build activities into classes where groups of us get together outside of class (preferably over coffee or meals off campus) to discuss group presentation ideas, and personally explore areas where student interests might link to existing PSU, UNESCO, and other outside initiatives.

To facilitate interaction and active learning, in all of my courses I co-present content and co-lead in-depth discussions with students. By co-presenting the students gain a more complete understanding of materials, while at the same time co-presenting with me changes the dynamic of the traditional student group projects. I am steadfast in my belief that **together** we are on a journey of discovery and that we collectively learn far more from each other than we do individually. Student evaluations indicate that they very much enjoy and benefit from this active learning.

**Building on active student involvement, is my second aspiration of instilling a passion for the true wonder of the art and craft of rigorous scholarship and critical inquiry.** This is facilitated through students taking part in engaged learning activities, critically analyzing and presenting course materials, and active theory-based debates of current issues. I expect, and demand, that my students adhere to high standards in their intellectual work. In achieving such standards, my students will work hard, challenge themselves, and critically examine all materials and ideas of others, and more importantly themselves.

I believe that the development of critical thinking skills and accumulation of knowledge do not achieve their potential if students do not apply these. To do so, I encourage and facilitate a variety of community involvement by my students. I expect students to take part in actions that directly impact their well-being and that of their fellow citizens. Included are engaged scholarship, civic engagement, social participation, and the development of plans for facilitating active citizenship within their sphere of influence.

In demanding high standards from my students, I dedicate myself to exhibiting such principles. As part of this relationship, I provide numerous opportunities for student feedback, return papers and other assignments in a timely manner, and provide opportunities for students to gain applied research

experience. I continuously revise my teaching methods and course content utilizing emerging teaching technologies, link course content to the latest research, provide a multidisciplinary approach to academic inquiry, and seek additional training through university and professional association programs.

In closing, I consider it a privilege and honor to be part of the personal, academic, and professional development of my students, and make every effort to instill in them a passion for learning and critical inquiry. It has been humbling to be part of the process where students successful complete their academic programs, move toward achieving their life goals, and significantly advance the human condition.