

TEACHING STATEMENT

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My students learn to think clearly and critically, to argue charitably, and to connect course content to their lives beyond the classroom. I balance student-centered and content-driven lessons, with opportunities for independent and collaborative learning. My assignments and evaluations draw on Bloom's Taxonomy, with frequent self-assessment and low-stakes practice. Also, I love teaching!

My Philosophy for Teaching Philosophy

Philosophy coursework is both informative and transformative. A good philosophy course teaches students to think clearly and critically, but it also challenges cherished beliefs and raises questions without definitive answers. Students find this frustrating and exhilarating. In all my courses, I help students locate this tension in themselves and turn it into a spirit of inquiry and wonder that will inform their lives and vocations.

This is especially true of my introduction to philosophy, *The Examined Life*. Every student has both explicit and implicit worldview commitments. In this course, I walk with my students through the major branches of philosophy and challenge them to (1) identify and scrutinize their own worldviews; (2) engage others' worldviews charitably; (3) judge the nature, scope, and impact of their disagreements accurately; and (4) develop a toolkit for structuring their worldviews critically and comprehensively. In our final unit—Ethics and the Good Life—students explore the implications of their worldview for private life, social life, and vocation.

A Look into My Classroom

My *Examined Life* course begins with a thought experiment; in fact, our path from beginning to end is littered with them.

You are hiking with friends when you spot a squirrel clinging to a tree. You try to see its back. As you walk around, the

squirrel shuffles so you never glimpse it. Did you go around the squirrel—yes or no?

Students quickly and playfully divide into the Yeses and the Noes. The exercise sets the stage for the semester by inviting low-stakes disagreement before we wade into deeper waters. It also delivers their first two lessons in logic: (1) agree on terms and use them consistently; (2) argue without bickering.

Most class days include a thought experiment, a think-pair-share, a short lecture or discussion, and a small-group exercise. A recurring activity is to isolate an argument from the reading and identify its form and premises; then we debate its premises and assess its validity (or cogency). Each unit culminates in a two-page, in-class argument-evaluation paper.

I use a similar method in my Computer Ethics course, but focus on case studies rather than thought experiments. Across the term, we develop a method for evaluating the social and moral implications of “cyberpractices”—social practices transformed by digital technologies. The midterm applies this method to an instructor-selected case; the course concludes with group presentations on student-selected cases. Past presentations have examined gen-AI art, parody deepfakes, self-driving vehicles, and video-game microtransactions.

Assessments

I assess student progress in varied ways. Low-stakes, in-class quizzes motivate careful reading and launch discussion. Participation-focused activities (e.g., small-group exercises) receive “credit,” “partial credit,” or “no credit.” Retakable, instant-feedback online quizzes support content mastery. Major assignments (e.g., argument evaluations and midterms) are graded with rubrics and then discussed in class after grades are returned.

Looking Forward

I really do love teaching. I continually update my pedagogy and assignments based on student feedback and performance, and I am working toward a Principles in University Teaching Skills Certificate from Saint Louis University’s Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning <<https://www.slu.edu/cttl/>>. The AI revolution is also reshaping my classroom. In my latest iteration of The Examined Life I discouraged the use of AI by placing a greater emphasis on in-class assignments and evaluation but encouraged it on select assignments—for example, an extra credit assignment asked students to illustrate a thought experiment with AI image generator and a small group exercise required students to feed ChatGPT a logic puzzle and then assess its answer.