

Care is essential in teaching and learning. No one can learn something without first thinking about it; and, no one concerns their mind with matters about which they do not care. I aim, therefore, to inspire my students to care for their thoughts and to care for the thoughts of others (by “others,” I mean both historical figures as well as their fellow classmates). My teaching philosophy therefore revolves around the notion of care.

I value structure with a healthy sense of flexibility. I give way for my students to cultivate their cognitive curiosities through a three step process: read, think and discuss, develop. For every class (after the first session) there is a reading assignment. The first half of the class session is spent discussing that material. To instigate exegesis, I either lead the discussion or break the students into smaller groups to allow for an informal exchange of ideas. The second portion of class is dedicated to elaborating on the text, taking the topic further by connecting it to other reading material or applying the relevant theory to current events. I find that the students take greater pride in their work when they are given the space to express their ideas and discuss the ways in which they agree or disagree with one another. My goal is to help my students grow to be more socially aware young adults and understanding of different perspectives on philosophical issues.

Each philosophy lesson in my class is also a lesson on bringing to my students’ conscious mind’s their own perspective as they learn to care for their thoughts. After each class meeting, there is a reflective writing assignment; basically, to answer two questions: (1) What was today’s topic of discussion? (2) Why is this (or is this not) a significant topic? I designed this re-occurring assignment for two chief reasons. First, this small assignment allows my students to engage with the philosophical literature in a unique way. Students who need time to digest their thoughts as well as those who are quick to respond to material will find a medium through which to express their ideas. Shyer students are just as able to participate as more extroverted students who communicate verbally. Secondly, the students begin to see the history of philosophy as a great long conversation in which their voice has a place if only they take the time to realize their own thoughts. This semester-long assignment also means my students are practicing their comprehension and writing skills.

By reading these small writing assignments weekly, I have live feed informing me of the progress the students are making as individuals, but also as a group. I am able to irradiate misconceptions immediately. By seeing that I am carefully watching their progress, my students learn to care deeply about their work.

I teach my students to care for cultivating their reasoning capacities. My students strengthen their ability to think critically and cautiously, to write concisely, and to respect their perspectives of others. It is my goal not only to teach the material at hand, but also and at the same time to increase awareness of the value of philosophy in the greater university community and in society in general. Upon completing the course, my students demonstrate how to determine the validity of arguments, how to evaluate the soundness of their ideas, and will have gained value for philosophy in general: returning to their field with an enriched ability to reflect, analyze, synthesize, and to write clearly and concisely.