



Sahar Joakim Teaching Statement

My students learn to think reasonably and act intentionally because I strengthen their cognitive capacities and forge in them a habit of examining their lives. By bringing to their conscious minds their perspectives on deeply human topics, I empower my students academically and personally. They become individuals who reflect on concepts and practices central to their lives.

For any class, my teaching method has three steps: read, think and discuss, write. I begin class by clarifying difficult parts of the assigned reading material. I turn to think-pair-share for structure when transitioning into small groups in which partners exchange their ideas to my guiding questions. After every class, students write their answers to the same prompt: what is the most interesting idea from today's discussion, and what do you think about it?

One week of my ethics course, for example, is dedicated to theories of friendship. Students read from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book VIII). They arrive in class having struggled through the material independently, and we begin as a group by reviewing the parts that proved particularly challenging. I ask the students: Can there be friendship without love? Are there kinds of friendship left out of Aristotle's discussion? Is Aristotle correct that friendship is required for a good life? Do we owe our friends something beyond what we owe others? The students answer questions such as these on their own, then they share their answers with a classmate and discuss the differences in their responses. After class, they write what ideas intrigued them most about the discussion and their view on the issue. After Aristotle's work, we follow the same process (read, think and discuss, write) for Seneca's and then Kant's theories of friendship.

My classroom is a collaborative environment in which students learn to think critically and how to clearly articulate their stance on philosophical issues. Extroverts, who tend to be quick to respond, have plenty of opportunities to talk through the issues in class. Introverts, who tend to need time to digest their thoughts, profit from the writing assignment. They type their reflection (on the most important issue from the day's discussion) onto the university's collaborative online system by midnight. The reflection assignment is helpful in several ways. First, it forces students to bring to their conscious mind their perspective on each issue. Also, they are constantly practicing their comprehension and writing skills. Thirdly, students continue the philosophical conversation beyond my classroom by commenting upon each other's posts, and this promotes the intellectual well-being of my students as they practice engaging in professional discourse. Since students bring their personal experiences into their discussion posts, the assignment also stimulates multicultural and interdisciplinary dialogue. Lastly, by reading their reflective writing, I have a live feed of student progress and immediately reorient those needing individual attention.