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Teaching Philosophy  
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Typically, half of my class time is spent reading from and explicating some primary text either as a class or in smaller groups. The second portion of class is used for discussion lead by student questions and concerns. By creating lectures that are flexible and friendly to student inquiry, I give way for my students to cultivate their cognitive curiosities.

I verbalize the agenda at the start of class. For example, I'll note that today we will be *reading a primary text aloud in class*, and further verbalize why I am doing it; for example, because *it is important to respect the work of our founding theorists*. By making what we are doing as a class explicit, students gain a higher appreciation for the work they are asked to take part of and further, the students take greater pride in their work. The only thing students learn from tedious nonsensical busy work is that they can get through tasks with carelessness and I forbid it.

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.

One method I employ to ensure the notion of care is a part of each lesson is my "small assignment." After each class meeting, there is a reflective writing assignment; basically, to answer two questions: What was today's topic of discussion? Why is this or is this not a significant topic about which students should learn? The students have until midnight of every class meeting to post their answers to our course site ran by the university. I designed this re-occurring assignment for to 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 in class by posting online as the more extroverted students who communicate verbally. And 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. My students have said they enjoy having plenty of options to earn points, however this is their and not my reason for favoring the small assignment. Thus, 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. Of course, this semester-long assignment also means my students are practicing their comprehension and writing skills; and, hopefully by reading and commenting on each other's posts the students grow to be more socially aware young adults and understanding of different perspectives on philosophical issues.

By reading this small assignment I am able to lead the unique group of students through the material by creating customized course content for the next meeting.

I have a 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 reviewing material from the previous class meeting before proceeding to the next syllabus item. By seeing that I am carefully watching their progress, my students learn to care deeply about the posts they make and must therefore pay close attention in class in order to write reflective posts.

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I teach my students to care for and to therefore cultivate their capacity to reason well. 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.

For a final grade, students choose a perspective from one of topics we have covered and either argue for or against it. 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.