

Reflection on Teaching Development  
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2017 DRAFT

When I began as a doctoral student of philosophy at Saint Louis University, I had never taught my own class before. I was told that I would teach in my second year of the program. I did not feel ready to be a teacher. I wanted training, I wanted skills and methods, I wanted to enter the classroom feeling ready to be an effective teacher. I immediately enrolled into SLU's CUTS program through which I gained confidence through intentional training.

As a part of the CUTS program requirements, I read "Teaching What You Don't Know" by Therese Huston. It's on "reading list" from which I had to select and read one book. This eight-chapter book ultimately gave me several tips for teaching that made me more confident entering the classroom to teach. When I read this book, however, I had not taught my own class yet. So when the book offered a rule to "**always stay ahead of the students,**" I was particularly confused. I was wondering: What does that even mean? How can I stay ahead of the students? How can I stay ahead of the students before I know who my students are and what their backgrounds in philosophy are?

Combining some lessons I learned in Praxis Workshops with the moral of the book, I realized later what this rule to "stay ahead of the students" really meant. For someone to teach and be called a teacher, they have to be teaching someone who does not already know the material. Only someone who does not already know something can learn it. What we call teaching is the act that results in a student learning. So, of course: the teacher has to be ahead of the student. Someone can still be learning a subject while they teach it, though. The catch is just that the teacher must learn faster than the students, staying ahead of them forever. The book mentions that 'the smaller the school, the higher chance that you'll teach outside of your comfort zone.' All I have to do to be an effective teacher is to stay ahead of the students each step of the way.

The book made me feel more comfortable about teaching undergraduate philosophy classes since I have taken a great long list of undergraduate philosophy classes myself. I should already be ahead, the book made me realize; so keeping ahead of the students should not be entirely difficult or scary.

During my time in the CUTS program, I received training for handling specific issues that arise in a classroom (such as a highly controversial debate) and received training for handling general issues that arise ubiquitously (such as generating a rubric for each assignment). The Praxis Workshops equipped me with skills and methods for teaching the material I selected to teach.

Through CUTS, the importance of differentiating my instruction became apparent to me, and I learned methods for reaching students with different learning styles. My teaching philosophy states that I aim to reach all of my students in my lectures, to teach them all to respect their own reasoning and the reasoning of their peers. So, as my assignments demonstrate, I require my students to post onto Blackboard after most class sessions expressing their thoughts on each topic. This assignment reinforces the lesson of each class but also aims to make each student feel as if their voice is valued and a valuable part of their own education. I strongly endorse empowering the students in this way. I want this subconscious learning to continue during class time, too. To that end, my favorite method for instruction differentiation is called "Think Pair and Share."

This is a teaching technique where I pose a question or problem and then after students think about it individually they work in pairs to generate a written resolution.

The Think-Pair-Share strategy promotes classroom participation and the skills which accompany group projects while maintaining individual learning. By allowing students the time to think for themselves and allowing pairs of students to think together, my students enjoy viewing one topic in many ways. My students learn their own conclusions, have to formulate their conclusions to their partner, have to listen to their partner's conclusion, and have to synthesize their ideas into a modified answer true to them both. These are values that I express in my teaching philosophy, and these are lessons I aim to teach in my other assignments.

The two-week online webinar on course design helped me generate the idea to begin and maintain the class with highly engaging material. From the first day of class, I want my students to see themselves and each other as a valuable piece in their education. As my syllabus states, my course aims to bring to my student's conscious minds ideas that they already have for the most part. With that in mind, I designed my introductory course to begin with familiar topics such as love and friendship and marriage. Most students, even those with no previous experience studying philosophy, will begin the class with some preconceptions regarding these topics. My hope in doing so is to allow for a maximum number of students to engage in philosophy and to learn philosophical reasoning skills despite their potentially viewing my course as nothing more than a requirement for obtaining their diploma.