

## Teaching Statement

Michelle Panchuk

Teaching was a rewarding aspect of my time at the University of South Carolina. I have taught a variety of courses ranging from Introduction to Formal Logic, to Classical Philosophy, to a senior seminar in Philosophy of Religion (see my CV for a complete list). In addition to breadth of content, I have also had the privilege of leading students from a range of backgrounds in the practice of philosophy. I taught an Introduction to Philosophy course at Camille Griffin Graham Women's Prison, where I taught non-traditional, first generation college students. I also have several years experience working with second-language-speaker of English from all over the world. In fact, one of my non-traditional students nominated me for the Two Thumbs Up Award (awarded by the Office Student Disability Services) for making a difference in his education and have received the Philosophy Department award for graduate student teaching.

Two primary teaching goals guide my practices in the classroom: 1) To provide my student with the tools to engage in the practice of philosophy for themselves, and 2) to help them discover the significance of philosophical issues for their personal development and fields of study. Upon successfully completing my class, students are able to read, identify, and comprehend central arguments in primary philosophical texts, charitably and critically engage the views of others, express and defend philosophical theses on the course topic, and, where appropriate, articulate both in writing and in oral presentations how the subject matter is significant for public and private life.

Several practices contribute to achieving the first goal. Students learn philosophy by philosophizing. In that spirit, I assign challenging primary texts in all my classes; use more guided group-work and fewer lectures; assign essays in which students critically engage the course material; and expect students to give oral presentations that demonstrate the relevance of the philosophical questions we engage. This class structure is demanding. It requires that students arrive having carefully read the material and that they engage with one another in understanding the text. In my experience, students rise to the challenge once they see that they *do* have something to contribute.

The means to the second goal depend on the course topic. In Introduction to Formal Logic, I include modules on constraint optimization and circuitry design. In my Introduction to Trauma Theory, I would invite someone from the local sexual trauma services organization to present on how the organization serves survivors in the community. In Contemporary Moral Issues, I begin with a unit on the ethics of consumption, reading *Consuming Choices: Ethics in a Global Consumer Age* by David Schwartz. I then assign an online quiz that estimates the number of slaves that supports the student's lifestyle. In my course evaluations, students cited this module as the most interesting and personally enriching part of the course.

Teaching is a central part of who I am as a philosopher—not simply a requirement I fulfill in order to get on with my own research. My research will contribute to a body of work read by a small number of specialized scholars. While I believe that this contribution is valuable, it is nonetheless limited in scope. In the classroom I have the opportunity to touch the minds, and sometimes the affections, of a much broader audience, and I truly do consider this a great privilege and responsibility.