# MY PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING STATEMENT

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My philosophy of teaching articulates two critical concepts: teaching and learning. I teach fellow students and I learn from them. The interaction of teaching and learning is about constructing a positive vision together with my students. This begins with the effort to set up a genuine "learning community", an authentic academic entity based upon Respect between the students and their instructor. One of the founding points I hammer out during the first day of class is to tell students that I don't see myself as more intelligent than they; rather, that I have more experience and expertise with the material they are endeavoring to learn during the quarter or semester. So, my duty is to foster and channel the way students grow academically; to help them be responsible for their academic blooming. Students should consider the instructors, their classmates, the library and all meaningful web-based materials as tools to accompany them throughout their adventure to acquire the knowledge they will need to understand the world and to ethically impact it. This is about CONCEPTUALIZING THE VISION.

To make the vision a reality, our "learning community" led by the instructor will initially need to set up goals. Everyone MUST be advised that these goals are practically unachievable without a rigorous principle of method. To know what we have to do is not enough; to know how to do it is critical and essential. From my perspective as instructor, importance is given to two states: (1) the level and the nature of my students' knowledge before each new lesson; and (2) the level and the nature of knowledge attained after completion of the assigned lesson. This establishes the interaction between teaching and learning as a complex and dynamic experiential process that leads to sensing whether my students have gained scholarly knowledge or not. So, each member of our learning community, each one according to his/her duties needs to take the time to consider goals and appropriate action in order to fulfill the vision. The triangulation Vision-Goals-Action is absolutely paramount. This is about MY GOAL FOR STUDENTS AND THE OUTCOME OF THE LEARNING PROCESS.

The Vision-Goals-Action ideal is ineffective without taking into account the context. The principle of personal responsibility to foster acuity and discernment depends on creating a powerful and worthy "class atmosphere". I never underestimate the seriousness required to construct a relevant, comprehensive, and unambiguous syllabus and the importance of the first class session where first contact takes place. Sociology and the array of social sciences are completely different in nature from mathematics and the array of physical sciences. The first are about manipulating abstract ideas whereas the second are about manipulating objective things and materials. This most important aspect of my philosophy of teaching is to set up interaction at the heart of the learning process. Once I have defined what we will be talking about, once I have defined the framework to scientifically approach the topic, once I have shown what the concept(s) is (are) and eventually what the method is, students need to be a dynamic part of the discussion stemming back from the presentation of the issue. This fosters their understanding of the issue and their critical thinking ability. The best example of engaging students into the learning process is the tool I have constructed to train students to know how to grade their classmates during the presentation-sessions. [http://georgesgomag.squarespace.com/teaching-excellence-evaluatio] This is about the DYNAMIC OF CLASS-SITUATION.

Once the genuine class-situation has successfully been established and the goals clearly made explicit, then comes the complex component of the academic learning process. This concerns the importance of theories to explain social problems. My students need to know that all endeavors to conceptualize in Sociology should make sense of concrete social life, our day-to-day life. The complexity in Sociology comes from the fact that sociologists and social scientists deal with complex social phenomena each in a unique way to explain these phenomena creating numerous and controversial perspectives that try to explain the same social realities. Social theories such as Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology, Semiotics, Social constructivism, Psychodynamic, Grounded theory, etc. are certainly complex but convey a deep understanding of our society. Lastly, the Journal Entry is an unavoidable assignment. I assign it to my students to implement complex theoretical knowledge drawn from class discussion within their own lives. This is about the COMPLEXITY COMPONENT OF THE LEARNING PROCESS.