

MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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I have adopted as my personal mission statement advice given by the late Dr. Robert S. Hartman. He said that there are only 4 steps to a successful life. 1. *Know yourself*. 2. *Choose yourself*. 3. *Grow yourself*. 4. *Give yourself to something greater than you*. The greatest wisdom I can pass on to my students is that they follow Hartman's 4-step path.

My observation is that, as educators, we tend to do a better job, on the whole, of teaching students subject-matter than we do teaching students about themselves. I strive in my courses to help students to learn to know themselves as well as to learn the subjects being taught.

My philosophy of teaching is that learning can—and out to be—a joy. I don't mean "fun" in the rib-tickling sense, but joyful in the sense that satisfaction stems from working hard to master a complex and difficult challenge. The professor's job is to find the right level of intellectual challenge to extend to his students; not enough and they grow bored; too much and they give up; the right amount and they learn and take joy in the learning. Most people are smarter and more capable than they realize. I strive to help students identify and capitalize upon their own particular genius.

Teaching and evaluation of learning are separate acts. Both are needed. I respect the necessary and important function of evaluation as being one of the obligations of a professor. And I take my role in evaluating student performance seriously. Evaluation, though, is merely a subset of teaching. And it ought to be a subset of students' learning. I do not, and will not, teach merely "to the test." One never knows when life itself will test what was learned in college.

I embrace the values of mutual respect and collegiality between faculty and students. In some ways, my youthful experience as an undergraduate at the University of Virginia and my late-career experience as a graduate student at Fielding Graduate University are worlds apart. Yet, a commitment to the values of mutual respect and collegiality between faculty and students is deeply honored at both institutions. During my seven years at Westminster College, I have endeavored to carry forward these same principles in my own teaching.

I strive to teach according to principles of androgogy and collaborative critical pedagogy that were modeled for me at Fielding. These principles, as articulated by Schapiro (2003), encourage me to embrace teaching methods that are:

- Inquiry-directed rather than answer-directed
- Experiential rather than purely didactic
- Collaborative rather than competitive
- Constructivist rather than transmission-based
- Person-centered rather than role-centered

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