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**The Graduate Writing Center**

**1. Overview:**

This packet introduces learning to write teaching philosophies. As part of this focus, this packet will address reading the field-specific and pedagogical practices critically. This packet will also suggest a variety of functionalities for the genre, present some major strategies for developing a process model of writing, and offer general tips on writing clearly and directly.

**2. Goals:**

* To help you articulate the strengths and goals of your own teaching.
* To approach the teaching philosophy as a genre (with conventions) situated within a disciplinarian community.
* To layout several strategies and tools for developing a teaching philosophy targeted towards specific schools and disciplines.
* To illustrate a process-based model of writing teaching philosophies.
* To think about ways the teaching philosophy can work in conjunction with your CV and cover-letter.

**3. A Note About this Packet and the Graduate Writing Center:**

Please note that this packet and the workshop it is based on are designed to address general writing principles. As a result, you may not always find the information in this packet or the workshop as directly applicable to your field or your current study. The best way to view this packet is as a summary of general writing skills that should transfer across disciplines. This means that the workshop and the packet are **not substitutes** for becoming literate in the writing practices and teaching philosophies in your own field, or for asking questions of peers and advisors within your discipline.

The Graduate Writing Center (GWC), located at 111 H Kern, provides free, one-on-one consultations for graduate students working on any kind of writing project – from seminar papers to presentations to articles to dissertations. Scheduling an appointment with the GWC is an excellent way to follow up on the practical information you receive during the workshops and this packet.

To learn more about the GWC please visit this website: http://pwr.la.psu.edu/resources/graduate-writing-center/GWC. Please note that the appointment schedule is posted one week in advance and appointment times book quickly.

**4. What is a Teaching Philosophy?**

The Teaching Philosophy is a one- to two-page document that provides a clear, concise account of your teaching approach, methods, and expertise. Each statement should be unique, and ought to fit within the general philosophy of the school and the department, and the specifics of your own goals and field.

An example of academic genre, teaching philosophies is one of “a class of communicative events” (Swales, 1990, p. 58), made up for common purposes. The specific purpose of this genre being a textual articulation of pedagogical work in university or school settings.

**4.1 Elements of a Teaching Philosophy:**

The genre must perform several functions. Rather than thinking of it as a product communicating your stance and skills regarding work in the classroom it is more accurate to think of as a collective process for specific purposes and towards specific audiences.

Broadly speaking, the teaching philosophy is a narrative answering the follow questions:

* What is teaching for you?
* Why do you teach?
* What do you teach?
* How do you teach?
* How do you measure your pedagogical effectiveness?

*What is teaching for you?*

How do you understand education? Is it preparation for real life or as pragmatic philosopher John Dewey famously explained “it is life itself”? How does the teacher and the work of teaching function under this general process of education? How do you build of your definition of education to talk about a definition of teaching in your field? Would you layout this definition at the beginning of a teaching module for your students? If so why? If not, why not?

*Why do you teach?*

Why are you drawn to the rewards and challenges of teaching? What is it that you can accomplish in teaching that you find particularly valuable and worthwhile? When you teach, for example, you can mentor students and contribute to their intellectual growth, gain new perspectives on topics that occupy your research, and reexamine the key ideas and assumptions that shape the production of knowledge in your field.

*What do you teach?*

What are the specific subjects and courses you are prepared to teach? What are your objectives for student learning? Why are these objectives important? Do your objectives differ depending on the type of course or the background of students you are teaching? If so, how? What should students gain from taking your courses? Examples include an understanding of foundational concepts in the field, sophistication as critical thinkers, or the ability to write concise and well-supported arguments.

*How do you teach?*

What teaching methods and strategies do you use to meet your objectives? Do you prefer lecturing, leading discussions, or group work? Do you use a combination of these methods? Why and in what circumstances? What kinds of assignments and assessments do you use? Why? How do you take into account differences amont students? How do you approach teaching students of varying aptitudes and levels of interest in the topic? How do you approach teaching non-traditional students? Do you use instructional technology? If so, why and how?

*How do you measure your pedagogical effectiveness?*

How do you know whether you are meeting your objectives? How can you tell if your students are learning? How do you use student evaluations to develop new strategies for engaging student participation or to meet other objectives? Has your teaching been observed by a faculty member or other evaluator? If so, how did you use the feedback provided to improve your teaching skills? Have you had a class or teaching presentation videotaped? If so, what did you learn from this experience?

*Exercise 4.2:* *Based on the previous information, succinctly answer these following questions.*

*Q. What is teaching for you?*

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*Q. Why do you teach?*

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*Q. What do you teach?*

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**5. Strategies for developing a teaching narrative draft:**

* Writing mini-narratives on learning, experiences, personal history, etc.
* Use websites on your own priorities and styles.
* Interview a professor on their teaching practices.
* Observe a class by a mentor.
* Imagine your ideal course and write out how it would work

*Writing subjective narratives:*

Write your story slowly and measurably. Use your everyday experiences as the space out of which you write it. Write out your little ideas subjectively. Using phrases such as “for me” or “I think” will enable you to speak more fluidly. Do not be afraid to limit you understandings as an opinion so long as it is grounded on experience. Get things down on paper and then think about what it really means. As this video points out, it is about fooling yourself into just telling your story: http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching-resources/document-your-teaching/teaching-philosophy/teaching-philosophy-video/

*Measuring teaching priorities and styles*

Having numbers in front of you can be helpful. You might ask yourself about how to measure your teaching style and practices. These two sites (http://fm.iowa.uiowa.edu/fmi/xsl/tgi/-data\_entry.xsl?-db=tgi\_data&-lay=Layout01&-view) and (http://longleaf.net/teachingstyle.html) numerically measure your goals and priorities in terminology that is prominently used in pedagogical research. The first presents your priority of goals in terms of metrics related to Higher Order Thinking Skills, Basic Academic Success Skills, Discipline-Specific Knowledge and Skills, Liberal Arts and Academic Values, Work and Career Preparation, and Personal Development. The second measures your style in terms of taking on the stance of Expert, Formal Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator, and Delegator. Take the results with a large grain of salt. The reports generated is only useful in that you take them as a way to start thinking about the topic.

*Interview a professor in your field*

Getting the perspective of an expert is undoubtedly a great way to start thinking about formulating the teaching philosophy. It has the added advantage of being field-specific and based on experience, which are probably the two most important components making up a good teacher. Ask them specific questions such as “What do generally go in the classroom?” and “What are the challenges you face in terms of getting your students motivated?” Try to record these interviews and listen to them at length and several times. Listen to the wisdom of age and whether you agree with them or not, they will give you a lot of ideas and ways to synthesize those ideas.

*Observe a mentor’s class*

Ideally you could also observe a class by a professor, but it is true that this can be intimidating. Therefore it might be easier to observe the class of a mentor. So ask them directly if you can observe them. Prepare for the observations by interviewing your mentors using the same set of questions you might ask a professor. Make sure you do multiple observations (usually three is the bare-minimum for fulfilling the requirement of veracity in observations). Watch the teacher and the students. What do they do? Does the instructor walk around or lecture? Do the students take notes and how do they take notes? How does the instructor work with the different styles of the different students and how do differences of culture impact these practices?

*Present a process analysis of your ideal class*

Think of your best-case scenario for your teaching. What would be the ideal course you would like to teach? What would you teach in that course? How would you make sure the students get the content and skills the course aims to inculcate actively and practically? How might your research fit into this course? Think of these questions and do a step-by-step (i.e. process analysis) essay about the course as a way to build into your philosophy.

*If needed forget about students and think of teachers*

Sometimes students can indeed be infuriating and teaching can be a chore. Additionally, recognize the paradox of the genre that a lot of the people writing it are graduate students who have never taught before. Therefore how to go about writing a statement of philosophy about an activity one has limited direct experience with. In such cases, focus on those who have inspired you. As a graduate student you have had to interact with one or two great teachers in your life. Talk about what impact they have had and articulate how they might have had it. Use them as your model as you write your philosophy.

**6. Two Major Styles of the Genre**:

There are generally two types of teaching philosophies. The first is traditional teaching philosophies and research-based teaching philosophies. Traditional teaching philosophies are more commonly

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| Traditional teaching philosophies | Research-based teaching philosophies |
| * Student centered * More common * More philosophical * A balance of particularity and abstraction * More about content (e.g. The ideas, skills, information, etc. taught in the class) | * Research and student centered * Less common * More a synthesis of research and pedagogical practice * Articulates how research activities fit into teaching * More about method (e.g. Archival-method or ANOVA-testing) |

**6.1. Outline of the Teaching Philosophy:**

Like most forms of academic genres, teaching philosophies generally tend to follow a familiar template. This template can outlined in this following way (in many ways reminiscent of the 5-paragraph essay):

**Introduction:**

* Lays out the definition of education or teaching. (required)
* Articulates the ways pedagogical effectiveness is measured. (recommended)
* Synthesizes personal view of education and metrics of effectiveness with the broader goal of the institution in question (recommended)
* Outlines what the aspects (definition and/or metrics) making up the rest of the statement. (required)

**Body Paragraph/Section 1**

* Topic sentence based on the first of the aspects laid out in the introduction. (required)
* Uses theories of teaching or theories related to the subject matter to articulate its operationalization in the classroom space. (recommended)
* Narratives this operationalizes with a specific example. (required)

**Body Paragraph/Section 2**

* Topic sentence based on the second of the aspects laid out in the introduction. (required)
* Uses theories of teaching or theories related to the subject matter to articulate its operationalization in the classroom space. (recommended)
* Narratives this operationalizes with a specific example. (required)

**Body Paragraph/Section 3**

* Topic sentence based on the third of the aspects laid out in the introduction. (required)/ Topic sentence about an ideal course you might teach (required)
* Uses theories of teaching or theories related to the subject matter to articulate its operationalization in the classroom space. (recommended)
* Narratives this operationalizes with a specific example. (required)

**Conclusion**

* Recapitulates the major points.
* Lays out future plans for teaching at the university in question.
* States point about how teaching and research can be connected.

*5. 2 Exercises on Teaching Philosophies*

Read the following two samples of teaching philosophies and, working with a partner, answer the questions following them (**These are not model essays** **and should not be followed exactly. Rather they represent strategic moves made by the writer to address specific needs.)**

Sample 1:

As a course’s intellectual facilitator, I help each classroom achieve its collective potential as a unique learning community while encouraging individual students to develop as thoughtful, self-reliant readers and writers. A dual emphasis on collective ability and individual assurance allows me to focus on several distinct teaching goals: preparing a range of students for diverse writing tasks, helping students become comfortable with the written word, giving students confidence in their ideas and ability to express those ideas. My secret hope, however, the powerful objective I aim for, takes place in a single moment. In that moment, different for every student but available to all, lies the unexpected effect of a beautifully crafted sentence or dramatically persuasive argument. If this sounds idealistic, I remain a pedagogical idealist of sorts, a constant reader who sees potential in a comma splice and beauty in a six-word memoir. In my experience, students respond well to this enthusiasm, encouraged to try new things in their writing for the pleasure of the experiment and the chance at success. For me, the challenge of effective teaching consists of sharing my idealism with students in a memorable, meaningful way.

This idealism also finds expression in my charitable approach to learning. Giving students the benefit of the doubt, offering the chance to correct a semester gone off course, costs me so little while it might mean for them so much. However, my optimism in the classroom is not limited to my students’ emotional lives or their interest in using writing to narrate their lives. While some courses certainly invite personal reflection—the multi-media memoir we create in freshman writing is one such personal assignment—others do not depend upon fostering personal optimism or social idealism so much as they solicit intellectual versions of positive effort and academic excitement.

Setting students up to succeed is about more than pushing a timid writer to take a stand or praising a daring but imperfect paragraph; also essential for me is establishing, and emphasizing, the value of communal endeavor. For example, my “Advanced Writing in the Humanities” course includes an “Institutional History” project supported by the Penn State University Archives. Assignments such as this one help my students to think carefully, and critically, about their own relationships to larger institutional values, goals, and principles, and allow them to see the personal and ethical elements inherent in their collective interactions or experiences. Some of the strongest student work emphasized the rhetorical positioning of university figures and the linguistic histories of Penn State collectives. For example, one student writer used emails from the first Penn-State student listserv to examine the ethics of institutional responsibility. Researching the history of Penn State LGBTQ societies and attendant campus debates, this student re-imagined a collective past of “Homophile” associations and unfettered email access to broad university populations. To our surprise and consternation, expressive freedom proved a danger as well as a blessing for historical campus communities. In this example and many others, I am both lucky spectator and energetic enabler of committed student work. Throughout the hurdles, successes, and experiments of my teaching career, I have retained my pleasure in language and my belief in collective effort, working hard in the classroom to convey that outlook to every student who passes before my blackboard.

Q1. Identify the definitions of teaching, education, or institutional approaches provided by the writer?

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Q2. Identify areas where the writer provides real examples where the ideas of education or teaching are illustrated.

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Q3. What functions do words such as “community” “idealistic” or “charitable approach” have in the overall essay? In other words, what is the tone of the writing? Does the writer come off as strict/ personable/ relaxed?

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Q4. Identify areas where the definitions are frames as subjective and why does the writer try to make the illustrations this way?

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Q5. What does the example of the “Advanced Writing in the Humanities” do in terms of communicating the writers being a good fit for the humanities? What would be an institutional history and archival work, and how is this an operationalization of research done in the humanities? How would a similar more work in other fields?

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Q6. Is this statement a student-centered philosophy? What are the ways in which the writer makes it clear that the philosophy articulated in the narrative is student centered?

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Q7. Look at the template in in Appendix 1 and grade the sample accordingly.

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Sample 2:

In most ways my view of teaching has grown from out of being a student at a private Catholic school in northeast India to studying in impoverished public schools of Nepal, and from studying engineering at prestigious universities in Nepal, Japan, and the US. The educational process differs radically amongst the various cultures I’ve been educated. As I sit down to write my personal vision about good teaching based on what I have found most effective, inspiring, and memorable, I find intriguing common denominators among the best teachers in my life, even across vast material, social, and cultural differences. In this essay, I first outline my personal philosophy of teaching and then discuss how I would implement my ideas in order to educate the next generation of engineers and scientists at Cornell. Though I lack experience teaching, in this essay I will discuss my ideas in relation to my experience of learning, observation of other teachers’ classes, and description of courses I would like to teach and how I would teach them.

**Teaching Philosophy:** From all my academic experiences, I have learned to value teaching beyond lecturing and other methods of mere delivering content. I value teaching that inspires students and opens new avenues of knowledge for them. I understand how challenging it can be for students understand the content of a course; however, I want to get students started with passion first. When a teacher fosters students’ enthusiasm for exploring the world of science, teaching and learning of content becomes much more meaningful, as well as easier. And as a research scholar who has studied and produced scholarship, I want to inspire students to identify and solve real-world problems by and beyond learning the content of the discipline.

Over the course of my graduate studies, I have actively sought to learn new methods, strategies, and activities for effective teaching. I have been observing classes taught by my mentors. I envision drawing on these experiences, as well as on my experience of giving numerous lectures and invited talks about my research. I have also developed teaching-related skills while mentoring younger graduate and undergraduate students. Working with students using the hydrologic model that I developed in my dissertation work, I was able to mentorh them in identifying issues, using the model to address problems and to interpret the findings on the basis of scientific and societal relevance. Some examples of the work I have done with my tutees and mentees have published by them in well-known journals and others are currently being submitted to various scientific journals.

I have a passion for this sort of teaching because I feel strongly about scholars transmitting knowledge and inspiration from one generation to another. The simple basis of that passion is that there always have to be good teachers behind scientists. In short, I am seeking to enter the academy instead of the industry because of the opportunity to contribute to the society through further building of the knowledge-bases of my discipline.

My ideal design for courses would base them three interrelated principles of teaching and learning: understanding the discipline, solving real-world problems, and taking ownership of learning. With these principles in mind, let me briefly describe two of the courses that I would like to teach would include and the approach that I would take for mentoring students.

**Course on Groundwater Hydrology:** This would be an advanced undergraduate course that focuses on the basic principles of hydrology and groundwater flow, covering broader hydrological processes and interactions among its components. I would teach the basics of hydrology, helping students develop a passion for solving long-term local and global problems of water resource and appreciate hydrology as an opportunity-rich discipline in terms of creating new knowledge to influence social development and preserve the environment. I would teach students how to conduct basic research in the literature of our discipline, identify problems and develop practical projects, and present their ideas effectively to different audiences. Because hydrology is a discipline that is intimately connected to public policy and social development, I would push students to learn about groundwater, subsurface flow, and the ecological linkages between human society and groundwater.

**Course on Hydrologic and Climate Modeling:** This graduate level course will help students review the field of hydrology in relation to ecology and atmospheric science. By integrating computer skills (Fortran or similar programming languages), the course will enable students to develop modeling in order to formulate hypotheses, acquire supporting data, devise various approaches to write model codes, and analyze the results to test their hypotheses. The course will expose students to real world problems by using local observations of hydrological data. Students will work in groups, learn how to write for publication, and develop their research agenda as future scholars and faculty. I will use my own research and scholarship to inform teaching this course, and my teaching will help further enhance my research.

**Graduate Student and Postdoc Mentoring:** I view mentoring as critical to education for both students and mentors. As such I am well prepared to deliver this service in this new position in areas including research, conference presentations, writing scientific papers and research grants, and build professional networking. As a mentor, I will appreciate and inspire students while providing critical feedback. I will also help students cultivate the habit of reading and staying abreast of the published literature. Finally, I will use the approach that best suits my personality: sociable, accessible, and willing to share ideas and encourage others realize their potentials, while benefiting from their ideas.

Q1. Identify the definitions of teaching, education, or institutional approaches provided by the writer?

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Q2. Identify areas where the writer provides real examples where the ideas of education or teaching are illustrated.

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Q3. How does the narrative get around the lack of teaching experience? How does the narrative present itself as subjective?

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Q4. Is this statement a student-centered philosophy? What are the ways in which the writer makes it clear that the philosophy articulated in the narrative is student centered?

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Q5. What do the two courses “Groundwater Hydrology” and “Hydrologic and Climate Modeling” do in terms of communicating the writers being a good fit for the Earth Systems Sciences? How are the specific technical skills in the field being shown as operationalized in the pedagogical work inside the classroom? How would a similar model work in other fields?

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Q6. Why does the writer end with an explication of mentorship? What do the descriptives “sociability” “passion” etc. add to the narrative? What is the overall tone of the essay? Does the writer come off as strict/ personable/ relaxed?

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Q7. Look at the template in Appendix 1 and grade the sample accordingly.

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**6. Textual Edits (The Paramedic Method)**

U.S. Academic written English prefers directness, activeness, and brevity. So once you have written a draft of a teaching philosophy that articulates the ideas and practices you want to communicate to your audience, you now have to focus on making sure each sentence is as succinct as possible. One extremely useful method for rewriting individual sentences (this is why it is appropriate for a 1-2 page write-up) is called the paramedic method.

Developed by Richard Lanham in *Revising Prose*, the paramedic method is a set of clear steps for analyzing and revising wordy sentences. Writers use the paramedic method to improve clarity and readability so that they communicate concisely and effectively. Basically, the paramedic method helps make confusing syntax comprehensible.

Take for example this sentence:

*“An evaluation of the effect of Class C fly ash and ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBFS) on the properties of ternary mixtures for use in concrete pavements was undertaken and is presented in this paper.”*

It is difficult to read for several reasons: readers have to wade through 26 words and an acronym before they get to the sentence’s main verb, it uses the passive voice, and it has 7 prepositional phrases.

The paramedic method presents a clear set of procedures to follow to rewrite this sentence.

1) *Underline the prepositional phrases in the sentence.* (Prepositions are words that indicate relationships between nouns and pronouns. Words like *at, in, on, of, to, about, around, below, above, from, into, near, since, through, against, after,* and *outside are* prepositions.)

An evaluation of the effect of Class C fly ash and ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBFS) on the properties of ternary mixtures for use in concrete pavements was undertaken and is presented in this paper.

*2) Circle the ‘to be’ (am, is, are, was, were) verbs.*

An evaluation of the effect of Class C fly ash and ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBFS) on the properties of ternary mixtures for use in concrete pavements was undertaken and is presented in this paper.

*3) Put a box around nominalizations and (thus) identify the primary action. Nominalization are words that have been changed from adjectives or verbs into nouns*

An evaluation of the effect of Class C fly ash and ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBFS) on the properties of ternary mixtures for use in concrete pavements was undertaken and is presented in this paper.

*4) Write the nominalization/primary action as a simple verb.*

Our example sentence has one nominalization that could potentially serve as the primary verb:

*evaluation*. When we transform the nominalization, *evaluation* becomes *evaluate* or *evaluates*.

*5) Ask, “Who or what performs the action?” Then write the new base clause with the agent in the subject position. Use the simple verb form from step 4.*

*“…for use in concrete pavements is presented in this paper.”*

(agent)

becomes

“This paper evaluates . . .”

(agent) (action)

*6) Keep the base clause near the beginning of the sentence, if possible.*

*7) Eliminate unnecessary words and phrases.*

The final two steps are generally done together as you re-draft the sentence. Don’t be afraid to rewrite the clause a couple of times if your first revision doesn’t sound quite right.

Your final product should look something like this:

This paper evaluates the effect of Class C fly ash and ground granulated blast furnace slag (GGBFS) on the properties of ternary mixtures in concrete pavements. (26 words)

The paramedic method has helped us reduce our sentence to 26 words from 36, a 28 percent reduction. That means that 28 percent of our original sentence was excess (Lanham calls it “lard content”). If you apply the paramedic method to all of your sentences, your writing can’t help but be clearer and more concise.

*7. 2 Rewrite the following sentences using the paramedic method.*

1) As a means of providing scientists with appropriate tertiary data, the conference is intended

to serve as a communication medium for everyone involved in the manipulation and dissemination of research findings.

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2) The decision by the managers was that the committee for road improvement would cease its activity for the duration of the term.

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3) From the beginning, the writing of this research article was marked by reluctance.

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4) The point I wish to make is that the employees working at this company are in need of a much better manager of their money.

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5) It is widely known that the engineers at Saudia Labs have become active participants in the search and rescue operations in most years.

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6) After reviewing the results of your previous research, and in light of the relevant information found within the context of the study, there is ample evidence for making important, significant changes to our operating procedures.

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7) Their motives were applauded by us, but their wisdom was doubted.

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8) The meeting was coordinated by Doug in Paul's absence.

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9) Even when the sun is hidden and the sky is speckled with stars, the heat lingers, hanging motionless in the air.

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10) Controlling the quality and level of television shows that children watch is a continuing challenge to parents that they must meet on a daily basis.

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11) Please take into consideration my offer.

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12) Our disposal procedure is in conformity with federal standards.

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13) We are currently in the situation of completing our investigation of all aspects of the accident.

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14) Do not accept bids that are not signed.

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15) If my claim is not settled by April 21, the Better Business Bureau will be contacted, and their advice on legal action will be taken.

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16) There are people that have the impression that Spanish is our first language, and English is a second.

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17) There was a bonfire going, and some music playing in the background, but not very many people were dancing.

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18) The point I wish to make is that the employees working at this company are in need of a much better manager of their money.

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19) It is our hope that you will find these changes mutually beneficial for yourself and your students.

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20) The impact of the shortage of paper in the publishing industry is that it is not a short term problem but will be with us for some time to come and can seriously affect the number of books produced by the industry.

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**7. Recommended Resources:**

Hayot, Eric. (2014). *The elements of academic writing.* New York: Columbia UP.

Homepage for the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence. (n.d.). Retrieved April 23, 2015,

from http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/

Penrose, A. M. (2010). *Writing in the sciences: exploring conventions of scientific discourse* (3rd

ed). New York: Pearson Longman.

Sword, Helen. (2012). *Stylish academic writing.* Cambridge: Harvard UP.

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2004). *Academic writing for graduate students: essential tasks and*

*skills*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press.

The Professor Is In. (n.d.). Retrieved April 23, 2015, from http://theprofessorisin.com/

The Teaching Philosophy/Teaching Statement. (n.d.). Retrieved April 23, 2015, from

http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/tstpts

**Assessment Rubric for Teaching/Learning Philosophy**

4=Very Good, ready for publication; 3=Good, some revisions suggested; 2=Fair, needs significant revision; 1=Poor, start over

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **History/Herstory** | **Relation to course(s)**  **and discipline** | **Grounding in theory**  **and/or experience** | **Appropriateness of**  **language to audience** | **Organization and**  **succinctness** |
| 4 Narrative is engaging,  emotionally honest, and reflective. You feel that you know this person as a person and as a professional. You understand her/his approach to teaching, learning and student talent development and why s/he takes it. | 4 Philosophy explains goals,  assignments, and methods of course(s) taught or planned. Writer explains how teaching is shaped by discipline and/or diverges from disciplinary norms. Writer connects teaching to disciplinary research and service. | 4 Writer shows how  relevant literature (including theories of teaching and learning) informs teaching  and assessment practices OR  refers specifically to strategies taken, assessment outcomes, and lessons for future practice OR both. | 4 Instructor chooses words  with care. Those unfamiliar with the discipline would find the language helpful, while  the choice of words is accurate, clear, and perhaps  even elegant to those in the discipline. | 4 Assertions are arranged  logically, with insight, and to rhetorical effect. Every paragraph is relevant and contains illustrative examples. No point is belabored, and  no statement is wordy or redundant. |
| 3 Narrative is engaging and  reflective. You understand the writer’s approach to teaching, learning and student talent development and why s/he takes it. You wish you knew more about this person as a person. | 3 Philosophy gives you a  good sense of what teaching responsibilities are or will be at the course level. Writer relates philosophy to  research and service, but you would like to know more. | 3 Instructor notes relevant  literature/experience and shows some evidence of systematic work to increase own and students’ understanding. May necessarily be limited by point in career. | 3 Diction is generally  appropriate to audience and does not seriously impede understanding. A few words need to be defined. Specialists may find an occasional imprecise or inelegant word or phrase. | 3 Assertions are arranged  logically, and no paragraph is irrelevant. Some slight reordering would increase rhetorical effectiveness, as would some economizing at sentence- and/or word-level. |
| 2 You have a limited sense  of the writer’s approach to teaching, learning and student talent development. You wish you knew more about this person as a person *and* a professional—what motivates him/her, how s/he relates to students, etc. | 2 Philosophy provides a  general description of current/expected teaching responsibilities. Writer identifies discipline but does not clearly show how philosophy is shaped by or responding to it. | 2 Writer is not reflective  about choice of teaching methods and assessment strategies and their outcomes. If experience is very limited, writer shows little awareness of how others go about improving teaching and learning. | 2 Diction is distracting. Many  words need to be defined for the non-specialist or replaced by more common words that the specialist would find sufficiently accurate for the intended audience. | 2 Ordering of assertions is  not entirely logical and/or some paragraphs irrelevant. The arrangement mutes or clouds the rhetorical effect that seems intended. Some points labored. Redundancies and wordiness are  distracting. |
| 1 The writer’s approach to  teaching, learning and talent development is unclear. Narrative is not engaging and writer evades all personal disclosure and self-reflection. You have no idea why this person teaches. | 1 Philosophy tells the reader  nothing about courses taught/planned or how the writer’s approach is similar to/different from that of others in the discipline. Nothing on how teaching relates to research & service. | 1 Writer neither makes  reference to relevant scholarly work on teaching and learning nor to what s/he has learned from experience. | 1 Diction is inappropriate  and/or incomprehensible. Disciplinary language is overused to the point of obstructing meaning for the non-specialist and belying a lack of clarity for the specialist. | 1 Rambling assertions are  presented without apparent logical structure, insight, or rhetorical effect. Many parts of the philosophy are irrelevant or redundant. Expression is wordy. |

Source: Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, Pennsylvania State University. (www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu)