Writing an Authentic Statement of Teaching Philosophy
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Preach what you teach

The Standing Committee on Language is looking for “consonance” between pedagogical practices and the candidate’s statement of teaching philosophy.” This consonance “will be assessed through a review of the statement of teaching philosophy, classroom observation, and the student evaluations.”

From “2010-11 Guidelines for Review of Full-time Renewable-Term Associates, Lecturers and Senior Lecturers in [Language]” by Nicholas B. Dirks (p.4)
How to Articulate Your Philosophy

- There is no required length, form, or content.
- Describe how you teach & explain why you teach the way that you do.
- Situate your teaching in research, theory, and/or practice.
- Do not cut-and-paste from the literature; avoid jargon; avoid trivialities
- Remember what you know about writing (e.g. free-writing; conceptual mapping)

Examine these pairs of examples. Do they explicate the how & why?

a. I don’t like classrooms with fixed seats or ones that demand that the teacher stand on a raised platform in front of the class. I prefer to sit with my students seated in a circle. Sometimes I do not even use chairs.

b. “Seating arrangements have a profound effect on the effectiveness of communication both between the teacher and students and amongst the students themselves. That is why for conversations and interactive activities involving only voice, I arrange the seats in a circle. This circular configuration encourages student participation as the students are in a position equal to that of the teacher. As such, it is more difficult for them to rely on the teacher for cues or to carry the conversation. An even more engaging arrangement for interaction or role-play activities is to not use seats at all. In this arrangement, role-plays become much more life-like and enable the students to use the language in the context of an actual situation. It is overall a more visceral experience.”

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a. “Gardner (1983) grouped human capabilities into seven categories which he called "intelligences." Weinreich-Haste (1985) claims that many people are surprised at some of the categories because they have never thought about these areas as being related to "intelligence." Linguistic Intelligence: People who are linguistically intelligent have the ability to use words effectively both orally and in writing. They are effective in using language in a variety of ways--to convince others to do something, to remember information, and to talk about language itself. Spatial Intelligence: This intelligence includes sensitivity to form, space, color, line, and shape. It also includes the ability to graphically represent visual or spatial ideas. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence: A person with this kind of intelligence has the ability to express ideas and feelings with the entire body. This ability includes such physical skills as coordination, flexibility, speed, balance, etc. Actors, mimes, athletes, sculptors, mechanics, surgeons, or dancers often demonstrate this type of intelligence. Interpersonal Intelligence: The ability to sense another person’s moods, feelings, motivations, and intentions demonstrates this kind of intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence also includes the ability to respond effectively to other people in some pragmatic way, such as influencing them to follow a certain action.”

b. I design language learning activities that actively encourage the use of several of what Howard Gardner labeled “multiple intelligences.” I appeal to the students’ ability to use not only words, but also logic, space, relations, and their bodies. In the “Strip Story” activity, each student receives a slip of paper containing part of a story. Students memorize their parts, give back their slips, and then proceed to line up and put the story back in the proper order. In these activities the students use linguistic, logical- mathematical, spatial, interpersonal, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences.
Consonance

- **Philosophy**: “The goal of the first-year Russian course is to develop the five language skills (speaking, reading, listening, writing, and culture), as well as to develop a solid foundation of the grammar system of the language. . . . Consistent and regular/daily work on the material and skills is critical for a successful and foreign language acquisition at the elementary level. The classes are conducted in a relaxed—to encourage student questions and active engagement in all activities—although rigorous way, and contain a lot of classroom practice where students work in pairs and groups to ease retention of the material.”

- **Evaluation**: “The instructor likes as much in-class participation as possible and that means lots of practice for listening to and speaking Russian on a daily basis. She has no problem posing a question to the class and then suddenly pointing to you with a smile and an expectation of the answer in grammatically correct Russian. I’d say about 25%-50% of class time was spent with pure grammatical instruction, going over homework, questions, and the like, with the rest of it being devoted to pairing up and being forced into practicing our spoken Russian, with the instructor bustling around, eavesdropping on our conversations and swooping in to offer the correct case or aspect.”
Examine these excerpts. Is there consonance or dissonance among the three?

A. Consonance or dissonance? Why?

- **Philosophy:** "In my language classes, students are required to speak in target language at all times: this is not always easy for students who are having their first encounter with this method of foreign language instruction. The first step, then, is to put the student at ease in such a way that even the most timid student is able to make the most of his or her time in the classroom."

- **Observation Report:** “Most of the class was conducted in English.”

- **Student Evaluations:** "I was afraid to ask for help." “This class gave me nightmares.”

B. Consonance or dissonance? Why?

- **Philosophy:** “I see myself as a linguistically-informed ally, providing my advanced-level ESL students with the sociolinguistic knowledge that they will need to excel at Columbia. For this reason, developing students’ discussion skills is paramount.”

- **Observation Report:** “Equally noteworthy was Dr. X’s teaching of the sociolinguistic elements of American academic discourse. How do you show you’re paying attention?’ he asked the class. ‘By asking questions,’ he answered, knowing that many came from cultures where doing so was frowned upon, ....When the reticent students did not speak up, he stopped the speaker and said to them, ‘You seem puzzled; you should ask for clarification.’ He was teaching his ESL students how to participate in a discussion with their native English speaking classmates.”

- **Student Evaluations:** "I spoke up for the first time in my history class! Thank you!"
How to Discover Your Philosophy

- Reflect on your teaching
- Speak with your colleagues
- Attend LRC workshops
- Do a values clarification exercise
- Observe other language instructors
- Refer to your department’s mission statement
- Re-examine your learning of another language
- Read other statements of philosophy
  - [http://ucat.osu.edu/portfolio/philosophy/Philosophy.html](http://ucat.osu.edu/portfolio/philosophy/Philosophy.html)
  - [http://sunconference.utepe.edu/CETaL/resources/portfolios/writetps.htm](http://sunconference.utepe.edu/CETaL/resources/portfolios/writetps.htm)
- Re-read your student evaluations

**Evaluations:** “She is incredibly organized and makes use of all kinds of technology--CU EdBlogs, Google Sites, MySpanishLab, in class audio/video, etc.” “Uses courseworks to great effect.” “She moves pretty fast during class with her awesome power-point presentations so make sure you pay attention.” “She often shows interesting youtube videos”

**Philosophy:** “I create web pages and PowerPoint presentations to supplement the textbook and to make material more accessible as visuals and internet help engage students more and help them understand concepts better.”

**Look at these excerpts from student evaluations. What might the instructor include in her STP?**

**Evaluations** “Her carefully crafted lessons go beyond the Dutch language and touch on Dutch culture and literature. After leaving her class, I feel as though I have a solid grounding in all aspects of Dutch life.”

She “keeps her classes fresh and interesting, as they are constantly updated and revamped. If anything interesting happens in the Netherlands, she'll come to class armed with news clips and articles. She organizes a number of activities outside of class hours, like Dutch dinners or theatre.”

**Philosophy:** _________________________________________________________________