

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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My teaching philosophy is to communicate key points to the students as directly and effectively as possible, securing that they understand these key points to the full. I have 8 main tools to ensure this: (1) Simplification (2) Visualization (3) Exemplification (4) Research based teaching (5) Active participation (6) Variation, (7) Supervision and (8) Improving students' language skills.

(1) By simplification, I mean a reduction of the complexity of a text, a research problem or a student's assignment, in order to ease understanding. This is not similar to not including the socioeconomic complexity found in every text, or social reality. However, it is my experience that only a deep understanding of the core issue allows for a more sophisticated understanding and discussion among the students. In sum, my preferred approach is to use Okham's razor and cut away all redundant information.

(2) By visualization, I mean the powerful tool of using diagrams, figures, photos, videos and audience response systems (PollEverywhere) to support the students' understanding of a theme or problem.

(3) By exemplification, I mean a frequent use of concrete examples from the literature, everyday life, my own research, my own life or from the students' lives. This in order to bring abstract theories down to earth and thusly make them more intelligible and relevant by relating them to concrete, real-world phenomena. I also do this by using exercises, including pro-et-con games in which groups of students have to convincingly argue for specific standpoints in argumentation 'battles'.

(4) My use of research based teaching has the purpose of training my students in becoming 'junior researchers' on the one hand, on the other hand spurring their interest in, and increase their motivation for learning about new, exciting areas of research. Examples are my research on social capital, trust and rural-urban relations. I regularly include students in my research and also co-author articles and feature articles to Danish newspapers together with them.

(5) I find active participation crucial and always try to stimulate students to raise questions, discuss with me in plenum, as well as with each other in short 'summing meetings' (with two in each group), or in bigger groups. Asking questions is a very simple but very efficient tool for transfer of 'demanded' knowledge. Therefore, I try to create a trustful learning atmosphere where students feel free to ask many questions. Likewise, I find it important that students actively contribute by making short presentations of journal articles, or book chapters.

(6) Together, the five above-standing tools aim secure variation and, hence, strengthen attention from students and efficient learning.

(7) I find supervision an indispensable tool for transfer of academic knowledge. In my view, supervision IS teaching. In contrast to traditional class room teaching, however, supervision of individual students or small groups of students has the great advantage that it is focused on the students' own work, typically semester projects, BA projects, or master theses. Hence, the students know exactly what knowledge they need. Moreover, it is easier to build up trust and common goals and understandings in small groups. Therefore, I find supervision the strongest tool for 'socializing' students into social science researchers (think like researchers, work like researchers, write like researchers), conveyed both through face-to-face meetings, skype meetings and, not least, by commenting on their written work (like a peer reviewer).

(8) Finally, for me improving students' language skills is part of good teaching. Students must learn to structure and write an assignment in a clear, intelligible and correct way. Apart from methodology/data collection, use of appropriate literature etc., clear writing (in Danish or English) is fundamental to the validity of a study.