

November 19 Seminar Summary

Today's topic was the teaching philosophy/statement that represents the final assignment for our students.

- We started normally, reminding students to fill in their time sheets and to continue with their classroom visits. We haven't had much of a feel for these things; see reflections for thoughts on that.
- A brief discussion followed a comment by one of our students about how to deal with struggling students. This makes sense, as it is nearing the end of the semester. We talked about what to do, and how to possibly be more proactive in the future by identifying the causes and reasons for the struggles of some of our students.
- We passed out five examples of teaching statements. They were hand-chosen to represent a range of philosophies; this range is reflected in the posts of the writers (one was a master's student, one was a PHD, one is a PTI, one a post-doc, and one a full professor). We walked through one closely (the first one, Dusty's) discussing its components and key points, as well as points of emphasis that Tim and Elliot found to be useful. The other ones we briefly summarized, assuming that they will finish the rest of them as homework.
- We discussed the reason for writing a teaching statement: among other things, we told them that it will help them figure out exactly what their philosophy is (or at least help to), it will motivate their classroom policies, it is necessary for university jobs, it is useful even outside of academia (since instructing other people is a key component to so many professions), and they come in handy if/when a student is nominated for a teaching award.
- We talked about how a philosophy can affect class in terms of lecture times, assignments, exams, student activities, classroom policies, our interactions with our students, and our availability.
- We presented a couple of things that helped us write our own teaching statements: in particular, how to write a statement when one feels as though he/she teaches like everyone else does. The suggestions were: think of one or two scenarios when a decision had to be made, and think of how your decision came to be, and how it worked; start with what you do *not* do (then tailor the writing so it is a bit more positive); and try to avoid sentences that anyone can write (the example of which is "I think students should be able to apply their learning").
- We talked about the primary components of a teaching statement: teacher role, expectations of students, how you think students learn, how you can facilitate learning with that in mind, what types of assessments are best, specific examples (which includes what one might do with greater control over a class), student evaluations and comments, sample lesson plans, syllabi, assignments, tests, links to a webpage, public appearances, lecture notes, and more.
- We talked about the voice one should use while writing a philosophy statement. This included a point about the differences in the types of jobs to which one is applying.
- The homework was to read the statements and begin to craft their own. We prefer actual written content, but we said we would also accept the answers to the following questions: 1) what is your role? 2) What do you expect from your students? 3) How do you think your

students learn, and what do you do to facilitate learning? And 4) What shaped your teaching philosophy?