

Department of Philosophy
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Teaching Statement and Philosophy

My primary objective is to help my students, at both the undergraduate and graduate level, develop critical reasoning and analytical skills. My teaching philosophy is guided by the notion that the best way to achieve this objective is by fostering cooperative learning. By engaging with students in collaborative inquiry and fostering an environment where they actively participate in their own learning, they can be empowered to develop resilience, independence, and a sense of shared enterprise which will motivate critical analysis of, and engagement with, knowledge.

I have over a decade of teaching experience, spanning secondary and university education. I have designed and/or taught 11 undergraduate and postgraduate philosophy courses at a number of universities, including the Central European University (CEU), New York University (NYU), Hunter College, and Baruch College. I have taught courses in ethics, critical reasoning, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, political philosophy, epistemology, and introductions to philosophy. Additionally, my role as the Department Head of the Economics, History, Philosophy, Legal Studies, and Political Science Department at Fusion Academy, New York City, provides me with valuable insights into working with a diverse group of students in a high school setting.

As critical thinking is the foundation of all higher education learning (McCormick, Clark, and Raines 2015), my objective is to facilitate the development of critical thinking and analytical skills through cooperative learning methodologies and relevant instructional strategies and techniques. By way of this experience I have determined that my objective is to facilitate the development of critical thinking and analytical skills through cooperative learning methodologies. The learning outcome for each course is to empower students to question assumptions and identify flawed reasoning, evaluate arguments and construct valid and sound argument forms, and engage deeply with philosophical concepts. Specifically, this means assessing the source of ideas, analysing supporting evidence and arguments, and understanding interpretations presented by key scholars. In this way, students can expand their knowledge base, enhance their resilience to navigate complex ideas and environments, and develop the independence required to fearlessly pursue their intellectual interests, and foster a sense of shared enterprise in collaborative inquiry. In summary, I take a constructivist approach toward teaching that acknowledges that students already possess a diverse set of unique life experiences, knowledge and skills which contribute to the learning objectives of the course.

I employ four primary strategies to help students achieve these learning outcomes. First, I as-

sign methodologically diverse but thematically connected assessment. This includes written assignments, presentations, exams, peer-led activities, problem solving exercises, and class participation, to evaluate students' understanding of course material and their ability to think critically and analytically (Murry 1990; Willingham 2008). One example is an argumentative essay on a current debate in philosophy that students develop throughout the semester: beginning with research, followed by developing a thesis and learning about philosophical writing and argument structure, and eventually culminating in their own critical analysis. Students are provided with feedback at each stage of development to encourage a sense of shared enterprise in their learning. Combining targeted formative feedback with subsequent practice encourages critical thinking by inviting students to devote more time to a topic (Ambrose et al. 2010; Bean 2011). I also present students with an interactive game-based learning game that I developed to present students with a quiz that challenges them to philosophise without the aid of supportive material, but which also fosters friendly competition and makes the learning exercise enjoyable.

Secondly, I establish rapport in the classroom to ensure students are comfortable learning and take charge of their own education. Therefore, I create dynamic and inclusive learning environments where students actively participate in discussions, problem-solving activities, and peer-led exercises, to compliment the more traditional assessment. For instance, I assign student presentations on weekly readings, and in-class quizzes to shift the focus onto students as active learners (O'Leary 2002), and to provide them an opportunity to share their voice.

Thirdly, I integrate real-world examples and interdisciplinary perspectives into my teaching to demonstrate the relevance of philosophical concepts to students' lives and broader societal issues, in line with Fox's perspective (Fox 1983) that 'teaching' ought to be understood as a verb applied to people and not to an academic subject. Students get more out of classes—both in terms of personal enjoyment, and knowledge of their content—when they feel a sense of ownership. If I can encourage a student to feel they are working on a project with me and the rest of the class, and that they are welcome to share their findings and opinions openly with us, then their engagement and learning invariably improves. To this end I always make it clear in my classrooms that students are active participants who can and should draw upon their own knowledge, while acknowledging the challenges that students may lack prior knowledge or context (Ambrose et al. 2010). With this in mind, I offer a final class as a peer-to-peer debate on a philosophical topic which is agreed upon by the class in response to our developing interests that semester. Examples include debates on abortion, democracy, consciousness, and anti-natalism. Further, students have the option of drafting and submitting their own essay question, provided they can explain why it is relevant to the course.

Fourthly, I am transparent about my own limitations as an instructor. By acknowledging gaps in my knowledge and fostering a culture of intellectual humility, I create space for open dialogue and inquiry in the classroom. I make a point of ending each class with time to field questions and comments about what we still do not understand about the subject, and I always ensure that I have a question myself to contribute. By soliciting input from students and incorporating their perspectives into my pedagogical approach, I aim to create a more responsive and student-centred learning environment.

As an educator committed to lifelong learning, I am dedicated to ongoing professional development and the exploration of new teaching strategies. I am exploring innovative cooperative learning techniques and incorporating emerging technologies into my instruction to better meet the diverse needs of today's learners. I am committed to promoting inclusivity and diversity in

my teaching practice by integrating inclusive teaching strategies and fostering a supportive and equitable learning environment for all students.



Liam D. Ryan

References

- Ambrose, S. A. et al. (2010). *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Bean, J. C. (2011). *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Wiley.
- Fox, Dennis (1983). "Personal Theories of Teaching". In: *Studies in Higher Education* 8.2, pp. 151–163.
- McCormick, N. J., L. M. Clark, and J. M. Raines (2015). "Engaging Students in Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: A Brief Review of the Literature". In: *Journal of Studies in Education* 5, p. 100. DOI: [10.5296/jse.v5i4.8249](https://doi.org/10.5296/jse.v5i4.8249).
- Murry, J. P. (1990). "Better testing for better learning". In: *College Teaching* 38, pp. 148–152. DOI: [10.1080/87567555.1990.10532431](https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.1990.10532431).
- O'Leary, Rosemary (2002). "Advice to New Teachers: Turn It Inside Out". In: *Political Science and Politics*.
- Willingham, D. T. (2008). "Critical thinking: Why is it so hard to teach?" In: *Arts Education Policy Review* 109, pp. 21–32. DOI: [10.3200/AEPR.109.4.21-32](https://doi.org/10.3200/AEPR.109.4.21-32).

1 Selected Teaching

1.1 University Courses

1. Adjunct Lecturer *New York University*
Fall 2019, PHIL-UA 4 Life and Death
2. Adjunct Lecturer *Central European University*
Winter 2024 UGST4178 Modern Political Philosophy
Winter 2022, graduate level, Belief
Winter 2022, UGST4009 Ethics
Fall 2021, UGST4020 Critical Reasoning
3. Adjunct Lecturer *Baruch College*
Spring 2020, PHIL 1100 Ethics and Critical Thinking

Fall 2019, PHIL 1100 Ethics and Critical Thinking (1)
Fall 2019, PHIL 1100 Ethics and Critical Thinking (2)
Fall 2019, PHIL 1100 Ethics and Critical Thinking (3)

4. Adjunct Lecturer *Hunter College*
Spring 2019, PHIL0100 Introduction to Philosophy
Fall 2018, PHIL0100 Introduction to Philosophy

1.2 Lectures with *Philosophy Salon*: [Philosophy in Manhattan](#)

1. 'Immigration'
2. 'Slurs'
3. 'Philosophy of War'
4. 'What is Romantic Love?'
5. 'Confucianism'
6. 'Utopia'
7. 'Philosophy of Sex'
8. 'Chinese Philosophy'
9. 'Are We Alone in the Universe?'
10. 'Aztec Philosophy'
11. 'I Think, Therefore I Am'
12. 'Aristotle and the Categories'
13. 'Ayn Rand and Objectivism'
14. 'Philosophy of Science'
15. 'What Is Art?'
16. 'Philosophy of Democracy and Epistocracy'
17. 'Abortion'
18. 'Should We Have Children?'
19. 'Does our Psychology Determine our Politics?'
20. 'Is Wealth Redistribution Justified?'
21. 'Existentialism'
22. 'Kant and the Categorical Imperative'
23. 'Philosophy of Christianity'
24. 'Is the World a Better or Worse Place to Live in Now?'

25. 'Wittgenstein'
26. 'Scepticism'
27. 'Martin Heidegger'
28. 'The Ship of Theseus'
29. 'Kierkegaard: Sickness Unto Death and the Three Stages of Social Life'
30. 'Free Will and Moral Responsibility'
31. 'Berkeley and Idealism'
32. 'Consciousness'
33. 'Does God Exist?'
34. 'Should We Assume the Accused Are Innocent Until Proven Guilty?'
35. 'What Do the Rich Owe to The Poor'
36. 'Moral Luck'
37. 'What Are Our Moral Obligations to Dead People?'

1.3 High School Teaching

Fusion Academy

2019 – Present

Head of Department of history, economics, and government. Managing a team of ten teachers. Lead teacher for students with complex psychosocial and educational needs. Courses delivered in Economics, History, English, Language Arts, Visual Arts, Finance, US Government, Psychology, Executive Function, Life Skills, Capstone Project, Critical Reasoning, Philosophy, AI, SAT prep, at Fusion Academy Brooklyn Heights.