

Teaching Statement

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Philosophy negotiates the conflicts between different areas of thought and life—how is morality possible, if physical laws determine what we do? how can we have knowledge, given our endless capacity to doubt? In my courses, students learn to question basic assumptions about our place in the world, and think through the problems that arise—preparing them to challenge conventions of thought in philosophy and beyond.

If philosophical concerns run deep, they will arise in everyday contexts—contexts that also disrupt standard debates and encourage independent thinking. For these reasons, assignments in my courses require students to reflect on their own experiences, while drawing on fiction, film and art. In the course *Time Travel, Free Will, and Causation*, students use examples of visual art to argue in online blogs about whether dynamic or static views of time best capture lived experience. They map and analyse the causal structure of time-travel movies using the online platform Mediathread—and use their results to examine how knowledge of the future can affect the free will of agents ‘stuck’ in causal loops.

A focus on wide-reaching philosophical problems also leads me to combine historical, practical and theoretical topics in my courses, such as examining interventionist accounts of causation in an undergraduate metaphysics course, and using feminist political philosophy in a masters seminar on research methods. In a graduate seminar, students consider how quasi-realist views developed in metaethics have consequences for realism and anti-realism in science. When this work is well-integrated, students actively seek new connections—such as by choosing paper topics that discuss ethical implications of metaphysical views of time. They also learn to apply historical interpretational skills to contemporary work—helping them uncover the unquestioned presumptions behind debates. I also draw on scientific research in my teaching, particularly as a challenge to our ordinary conception of the world—such as by using results from statistical mechanics to suggest time has no in-built direction. In addition to the metaphysics and graduate courses mentioned, I’m also prepared to teach courses in advanced epistemology (*The Practice of Knowing*) that draw on arguments from pragmatism to motivate contextualist views of knowledge, as well as courses in philosophy of science, philosophy of physics, and history of philosophy (Kant–Hegel).

Finally, my teaching involves students in the philosophical project in ways that value its unfixed and open-ended nature. In a graduate seminar course on philosophical methods, students use post-class writing tasks to reflect on how our discussions have reshaped their understanding of the text, and to highlight techniques they can use in articulating their own ideas. Even in large courses, twitter assignments and online discussion groups allow students to incite each other, as well as have their responses incorporated into lecture material.

Philosophy trains us to see the gaps and conflicts in our worldviews, and be unafraid to challenge what seems puzzling. By learning to articulate their concerns with others, my students will become more responsible participants in enquiry, better able to question and negotiate conflicts in areas far beyond the classroom.