

Teaching Dossier

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1. Statement of Teaching Philosophy

My goal in the classroom is to model respect for others and their ideas while encouraging students to critically examine their own and others' philosophical commitments. Achieving this goal not only provides students from diverse backgrounds with a supportive learning environment in which to grapple with philosophical problems, it also enables students to develop skills that they can apply far beyond the classroom.

A central challenge when teaching philosophy is to get students to care about philosophical problems. I do this by taking examples from popular culture or from history, and I use these examples to elicit what students already think about a topic. Then, as the course progresses, I come back to the examples in order to prompt students to gauge whether their thoughts on the matter have changed.

For example, in a class on the topic of morality, I showed a 40-minute clip from the movie *Hollow Man*, a re-telling of "The Ring of Gyges" story used by Plato in *The Republic*. In the movie, Kevin Bacon plays a scientist who has discovered how to become invisible. Bacon soon finds himself in situations where he can get away with acting however he pleases, given that no one can see him. However, his actions are immoral.

After showing the clip, I polled the class about what they thought Bacon should have done in each situation, and I asked them to explain why they thought as they did. As I led the class into discussion, I noted when students' answers were evocative of the theories of ethics we would study. This piqued students' interest in the topic by showing them that these theories could speak to their world and the questions they have about it. It also meant that students approached the class with something at stake. Now, whenever they encountered an argument against the reason they had given for why Bacon should have acted otherwise, they would have to formulate a response or revise their view.

As we worked through the answers of figures like Hobbes, Mill, Kant, and Hume to the question why we ought to do what is morally right, even when doing so conflicts with our prudential interests, I kept coming back to the example of Bacon's character in the movie. I asked students to frame each of the philosophers' arguments as an address to Bacon. Would the argument in question convince Bacon that he should act morally? Did it conflict with what the students had started out thinking? Moreover, because I constantly emphasized the insightful parts of what each student said, everyone in class saw the importance of respecting and appreciating other students' points of view.

A second challenge when teaching philosophy is to equip students with better writing skills. I do this by requiring rough drafts and peer review on at least one assignment. I find that students are more motivated when their peers will see their work, and the opportunity to revise—with both peer and instructor feedback—always makes their work better. My own feedback emphasizes that revising is more than just making editorial changes. Real revision may require tearing a paper apart to get at its central argument, then rewriting it around a new line of reasoning. This strategy has helped students in my classes to make significant progress in writing clear and forcefully argued papers.

A final challenge is getting students to treat philosophy as an interactive activity. I do this by encouraging plenty of in-class discussion, which allows students to contribute and

feel engaged, and also gives me immediate feedback about how well the students understand the material. For students who are shy about speaking in class, group work provides an opportunity to discuss their ideas with their peers and with me. I also enjoy bringing my research into the classroom, since this helps students to see that philosophy is something exciting to do. Often, feedback from students has benefited my own research.

These teaching strategies have resulted in strong evaluations as a course instructor. For instance, students' comments in my evaluations for Introduction to Philosophy included: "I liked learning different philosophical questions through movies." "I really appreciated . . . the effort [the instructor] made in encouraging everyone to speak up." "Shortly and informally, Philosophy 102 rocked."

My greatest reward as a teacher is when students tell me that I have sparked their interest in philosophy. That is what I want my students to remember about me as a teacher ten years from now: that I sparked their interest in philosophy, that I modeled intellectual inquiry and respect for others and their ideas, that the elective they took with me all those years ago was the best class they have ever taken. And hopefully, they will still be using the toolbox of intellectual skills that they acquired in my class.

2. University Teaching Experience

2.1 Courses Taught as Primary Instructor

Responsibilities included course planning, ordering books, delivering lectures, leading discussion, designing and grading both exams and written assignments, holding office hours and meeting with students to clarify questions about course content.

PHI 6325: Philosophy of Mind

Department of Philosophy, Florida State University, Fall 2016 (enrollment 20).

This was a graduate seminar in the philosophy of mind, which I team-taught with Al Mele.

The course explored central themes in the philosophy of action and moral psychology, with a special focus on recent work in the philosophy and science of self-control. The course also focused on issues related to manipulation and moral responsibility. One class I taught covered my recent co-authored paper with Eddy Nahmias in *Philosophical Studies* on the topic of manipulation and control.

Evaluation for PHI 6325 was by: (1) two shorter papers (1500–2000 words each), both of which were graded by me. (2) One longer paper (3000–4500 words), which was graded by Al Mele.

PHI 2630-01: Ethical Issues and Life Choices

Department of Philosophy, Florida State University, Fall 2016 (enrollment 140).

I had full responsibility for the design of this course, including the development of examinations and assignments.

This was a large introductory philosophy course that covered normative ethical theories and applied ethical questions such as the morality of killing in war, the ethics of homosexuality, prostitution, sexual offense policies, same-sex-marriage, reparations for slavery, affirmative action, racial profiling, and campus hate-speech codes. In teaching the course, I was supported by two teaching assistants from the philosophy department.

Evaluation for PHI 2630-01 was by: (1) Participation (20% of course grade), assessed by using i>Clickers for class discussion and group activities. (2) Reading quizzes (20% of course grade). There were between 8 and 20 of these quizzes, which were unannounced and covered the reading scheduled for a given day. Assessment was by i>Clicker in class. (3) Two papers of between 1200–1500 words (15% of course grade each). (4) Final examination (30% of course grade).

PHIL RELI 245: Existential Problems

Department of Philosophy, University of Arizona, Spring 2015 (enrollment 40).

I had full responsibility for the design of this course, including the development of examinations and assignments.

This was an introductory philosophy course that focused on central problems of the human condition, such as love and sexuality; the meaning of life and death; right and wrong; the nature of mind and body; free will; personal identity; and the nature of the self.

Evaluation for PHIL RELI 245 was by: (1) Lecture-notes assignments (15% of course grade), for which students submitted 1–2 typed pages of their own notes from a lecture. These were graded according to the notes' accuracy, completeness, relevance, and structure, with bonus points for double-entry notes. To make double-entry notes, students divided their page into two columns. The left column contained the student's notes for the class. The right column contain their own critical reflections pertaining to the content of the lecture, as recorded in the left column. (2) Six short essays (45% of course grade), which progressively asked students to identify and state the thesis of a paper and say why it matters, identify and state a thesis and lay out an author's argument for that thesis, and critically evaluate an argument by considering objections and potential replies to those objections. (3) A final take-home exam (40% of course grade).

PHIL COGS 450/550: Philosophy of Mind (Perception)

Department of Philosophy, University of Arizona, Fall 2015 (enrollment 25).

This was a cross-listed upper-level undergraduate and graduate seminar in the philosophy of perception for both philosophy and cognitive science students. I had full responsibility for designing the course, including all examinations and assignments.

The course focused on the human sensory modalities: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. We covered classic readings on individuating the senses, as well as more recent work on how the different senses interrelate with each other. Topics included: new models of perception, multimodal perception, the non-visual senses, cognitive penetration, and perception and action.

Creating and teaching this cross-listed upper-level undergraduate and graduate course presented distinct challenges, including the development of different assessment standards for undergraduate and graduate students, and the requirement to teach to each of these groups' knowledge bases at the same time. Additionally, many of the undergraduate students were psychology majors and did not have much background in philosophy. Part of my reason for selecting the human sensory modalities as the topic for this course was that it enabled me to include recent empirical work on the senses, with which I was better able to capture these students' interest and attention, in order to motivate the more straightforwardly philosophical issues.

Evaluation for PHIL COGS 450 was by (1) short blurbs posted to the “Blurbs” section of course website before every class (20% of course grade); (2) questions posted to the “Assigned Questions” section of course website before every class (20%); (3) a take-home midterm exam (20%); (4) a take-home final exam (20%), and (5) a term paper of maximum 1500 words (20%).

Evaluation for PHIL COGS 550 was by (1) short blurbs posted to the “Blurbs” section of course website before every class (10% of course grade); (2) questions posted to the “Assigned Questions” section of course website before every class (10%); (3) a take-home midterm exam (20%); and (4) a term paper of maximum 3000 words (60%).

PHIL 102: Introduction to Philosophy 2

Department of Philosophy, University of British Columbia, Summer 2011 (enrollment 23), Summer 2012 (enrollment 37).

I had full responsibility for the design of this course, including the development of examinations and assignments. Both of these courses presented special challenges since they were intensive summer courses that involved two three-hour lectures per week, over six weeks. Since it was not feasible for me to lecture non-stop each time, I made a decision to teach the course partly through science-fiction movies.

The course covered five topics relating to value and human life, including morality, the meaning of life, free will, personal identity, and death. Each of the five topics was motivated by watching part of a science-fiction movie.

For the topic of morality, we watched an excerpt from “Hollow Man,” a modern retelling of the “Ring of Gyges” story. For the meaning of life, we watched part of “Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.” For free will, we watched “Minority Report.” For personal identity, we watched “Total Recall,” which focuses on the psychological continuity criterion for identity. Finally, for the topic of death, we watched “Blade Runner.”

Watching these movies served two purposes. First, it meant that neither the students nor I was subjected to three hours of lecturing at a time, which seemed unsuitable for an introductory class. Second, the movies helped to motivate students’ interest in the topics we were addressing.

Evaluation for PHIL 102 was by (1) quizzes taken during the movies (to promote active watching), (2) two short written assignments (students had to reconstruct an argument and then defend a position on one of the topics of the course), (3) a mid-term exam (multiple choice/short answers), and (4) a final exam (multiple choice/short answers/long answers).

2.2 Courses as Teaching Assistant

Responsibilities included leading discussion sections, grading papers and exams, holding office hours and meeting with students to clarify questions about course content.

PHIL 102: Introduction to Philosophy 2

Department of Philosophy, University of British Columbia, Spring 2013

PHIL 240: Knowledge and Reality 1

Department of Philosophy, University of British Columbia, Spring 2010, Spring 2011

PHIL 230: Introduction to Moral Theory

Department of Philosophy, University of British Columbia, Spring 2009

PHIL 435: Environmental Ethics

Department of Philosophy, University of British Columbia, Spring 2008

PHIL 375: Philosophy of Literature

Department of Philosophy, University of British Columbia, Fall 2007

PH 1001: Introduction to Philosophy

Department of Philosophy, University College Cork, Fall, 2006, Spring 2007

PO 1001: Introduction to Politics

Departments of Philosophy, History, and Political Science, University College Cork, Fall, 2006, Spring 2007

2.3 Senior Teaching Assistant

Department of Philosophy, University of British Columbia, Fall 2012, Spring 2013

Responsibilities included organizing a TA Training Workshop in the Philosophy Department, providing peer-review of TAs' discussion sections and Graduate Instructors' lectures, and meeting individually with philosophy TAs and Graduate Instructors to clarify any concerns they might have about their positions.

3. Professional Development

3.1 TA Training Workshop

Department of Philosophy, UBC, September 12, 2012

For the academic year 2012–13, I was appointed Senior TA in the Philosophy Department at UBC. This is a peer-mentoring role that involves reviewing TAs' discussion sections and Graduate Instructors' lectures, as well as meeting with philosophy TAs and Graduate Instructors to clarify any concerns they might have about their positions. In my capacity as Senior TA, I organized a TA Training Workshop for incoming and current TAs and Graduate Instructors at UBC at the start of the fall term.

Speakers (whom I invited) and topics included:

- Professor Alan Richardson, Department Head: The role of TAs and instructors
- Professor Andrew Irvine: Grading—the basics
- Professor Sylvia Berryman: Giving lectures
- Dr. Joseph Topornycky: Resources at the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology
- Oisín Deery: Dealing with common TA and instructor problems

3.2 Instructional Skills Workshop

Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, UBC, October 9–11, 2009

This 3-day, internationally recognized workshop has been the foundation of faculty development programs at UBC and elsewhere in the world for more than 25 years. It is a learner-centered, participatory workshop, designed so that every participant delivers three short lessons. At least one lesson by each participant is video-recorded so that participants can review their performance afterward. This was a valuable experience for me, since it gave me a student's-eye perspective on my own teaching style, which resulted in my making several changes to the way that I teach. All participants also received verbal and written feedback from the group on what went well and suggestions for improvement.

Subjects covered:

- Course design and planning, Delivering large lectures, Leading discussion
- The use of technology in the classroom, Increasing participatory learning
- Students with special needs, Differences in learning styles
- Providing feedback to students, Classroom activities, Evaluation of student learning
- Teaching portfolios

4. Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness

4.1 PHIL COGS 450/550: Philosophy of Mind (Perception) (Fall 2015, University of Arizona, enrolment: 22; evaluation responses: 19). Primary Instructor.

Evaluations (highlights; full evaluations follow):

<i>almost always effective (5) – almost never effective (1)</i> What is your overall rating of this instructor's teaching effectiveness?	4.6/5
<i>one of the best (5) – one of the worst (1)</i> What is your overall rating of this course?	4.1/5
<i>strongly agree (5) – strongly disagree (1)</i> I was treated with respect in this class.	4.7/5
<i>one of the most effective (5) – one of the least effective (1)</i> Rate this instructor compared with other instructors you have had.	4.3/5
<i>almost always useful (5) – almost never useful (1)</i> Overall usefulness of outside (not in class) assignments.	4.2/5
<i>almost always useful (5) – almost never useful (1)</i> Overall usefulness of assigned texts and readings.	4.4/5
<i>strongly agree (5) – strongly disagree (1)</i> This course challenged me intellectually.	4.7/5
The instructor was skillful at communicating new concepts.	4.6/5
The instructor inspired interest in the subject matter of this course.	4.5/5
The instructor responded effectively to student questions and ideas.	4.7/5
The instructor presented the course content in a helpful way.	4.4/5
The course materials were helpful.	4.4/5
The instructor was helpful to me outside the classroom.	4.4/5
The instructor helped me develop my analytic skills.	4.5/5
The instructor challenged me to think critically about the concepts in this course.	4.7/5

Student comments for this course emphasizing positive aspects of my teaching:

1. “Great class discussions and lectures.”
2. “I liked the instructor’s willingness to be a helpful resource and his ability to provide in detail feedback for students who were seeking help in the course.”
3. “It seems important, coming from a science major, to inform models and hypotheses about what is happening in the brain with contemporary philosophical ideas. A conversation needs to be had. The professor, coming from a philosophical background, provided this conversation very well, acknowledging the differences between philosophy and neuroscience, but ensuring that dialogue between the disciplines both occurs and is useful for everyone.”
4. “Prof. Deery is such an outstanding instructor (probably one of the best at the university) who brings energy, nuance of thought, and great teaching abilities that he inspired me to slog through the readings and actually dedicate a great deal of my time to doing well in the course. . . The fact that he could take the 40% of the uninteresting material and make it as interesting and relevant as possible has persuaded me that he is a wonderful teacher.”

Examples of student comments that helped me improve my teaching:

1. “More powerpoint slides.”
2. “Possibly more structure on the lectures regarding the articles assigned.”

Since this was a cross-listed upper-level undergraduate and graduate seminar, I tended to use fewer slides than normal and instead I had more discussion in class. It can be difficult to strike the right balance between a structured lecture using slides and discussing in class for a course like this one, and in the future I will certainly continue to try to strike this balance in a way that is maximally useful for all students taking such a course.

3. “Would have liked to see more emphasis given to theories of the mind (not just occasional discussions in passing,) as well as more emphasis on consciousness and metaphysics. Fortunately, there was more of it toward the end of the course, but not enough to give a student an understanding of the general ideas of the philosophy of mind.”

Teaching a mixed group of undergraduates and graduate students coming from philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science required me to teach to each of these groups’ knowledge bases at the same time. Part of my reason for selecting the sensory modalities as the topic for the course was that it enabled me to include new empirical work on the senses, which made capturing the psychology and cognitive science students’ interest easier. In retrospect, it seems inevitable that my adopting this strategy would result in a call from some for more straightforwardly philosophical material.

4.2 PHIL 102: Introduction to Philosophy 2 (Summer 2012, UBC, enrolment: 37; evaluation responses: 33). Primary Instructor.

Evaluations:

1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

The instructor made it clear what students were expected to learn.	4.3/5
The instructor communicated the subject matter effectively.	4.2/5
The instructor helped inspire interest in learning the subject matter.	4.2/5
Overall, evaluation of student learning was fair.	4.1/5
The instructor showed concern for student learning.	4.3/5
Overall, the instructor was an effective teacher.	4.4/5
Student participation in class was encouraged by the instructor.	4.2/5
High standards of achievement were set.	4/5
The instructor was generally well prepared for class.	4.5/5
The instructor was readily available to students outside of class.	4.5/5
The instructor treated students with respect.	4.7/5

1= very poor, 2= poor, 3= neutral, 4= good, 5= very good

Considering everything, how would you rate this instructor?	4.5/5
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Student comments for this course emphasizing positive aspects of my teaching:

1. “The lectures were amazing. Oisín was a very effective lecturer.”
2. “The lectures were very informative, well put together, and well paced. Oisín was always prepared for class and never once did I feel like he wasn’t informed on a topic or didn’t care about it. His passion for philosophy really comes through when he speaks, and when a professor is passionate about a topic, it’s much easier to learn for the students. Also, he was always ready to answer questions from students or clarify difficult topics, and that was much appreciated. It was great knowing that, if I had a question, I didn’t fear asking it. Lastly, I really enjoyed the inclusion of science fiction movies because they helped me put concepts together in a visual way. It was a helpful learning aid to lecture.”
3. “The lectures really helped me understand the readings.”

4. "Oisín was very clear and concise, and the discussion was helpful in expanding upon what he had already said."
5. "Our instructor presented the topics clearly and his methods of teaching made the material quite understandable. The slides and the pauses for discussion during the lectures definitely clarified most of the readings and taught me the most about the content. I like how he presented different points of view and didn't show as much bias as some of my past instructors. I think this aspect is very important because it really helps students develop their own answers/views about certain issues/questions. The movie clips he showed provided great visuals and allowed us to engage with the material even more as we relate to the characters. Also, I like how he took his time to answer my long series of questions via email a few hours (max. a day) after I sent them! It certainly sparked my interest in the topics because he actually explained & expanded in paragraphs as opposed to just saying the usual one-liner 'yes, I think that is interesting.' "

Examples of student comments that helped me improve my teaching:

1. "I think a few practice questions to answer before the midterm/final would give us a good idea of how to prepare for the exams. Maybe a very small group assignment or a sheet of questions to answer then discuss in class would do!"
2. "I would recommend practice sample exams just to check on whether we are prepared or not."

Several students had comments like these. In the future, I plan to include a practice session before exams, where I provide (for instance) a sample exam that I used in a previous year.

3. "Group work could provide a way to reinforce concepts."

Due to comments I received in a previous class, I had cut down on group work this time, in order to allow for more open discussion. In a compressed course like this, it is challenging to strike a balance between lecture, open discussion, and group work. I will keep working to strike this balance.

4.3 PHIL 102: Introduction to Philosophy 2 (Summer 2011, UBC, enrolment: 23; evaluation responses: 23). Primary Instructor.

Evaluations:

1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

The instructor made it clear what students were expected to learn.	4.2/5
The instructor communicated the subject matter effectively.	4/5
The instructor helped inspire interest in learning the subject matter.	4.3/5
Overall, evaluation of student learning was fair.	4/5
The instructor showed concern for student learning.	4.2/5
Overall, the instructor was an effective teacher.	4.5/5
Student participation in class was encouraged by the instructor.	4.5/5
High standards of achievement were set.	3.8/5
The instructor was generally well prepared for class.	4.5/5
The instructor was readily available to students outside of class.	4.4/5
The instructor treated students with respect.	4.7/5
1= very poor, 2= poor, 3= neutral, 4= good, 5= very good	
Considering everything, how would you rate this instructor?	4.5/5

Student comments for this course emphasizing positive aspects of my teaching:

1. "I really appreciated how respectful he was to all students, and the effort he made in encouraging everyone to speak up."
2. "[I learned most from] Portions of the lectures in which the teacher was both breaking down what the assigned readings were about and elaborating on the topics raised within those readings. Class discussions were also run very effectively — he would restate student comments to make them clearer in the context of the discussion and also motivate questions/contradictions that arose."
3. "The section on morality was my favorite. It provided new perspectives. Overall, class discussion was the most enlightening."
4. "I think the amount of course load and the level of difficulty were just right for a summer course. I liked learning different philosophical questions through movies and class discussion."

5. “The instructor exceeded my expectations, and I don’t think it could have been improved in any way. Shortly and informally, Philosophy 102 rocked.”

Examples of student comments that helped me improve my teaching:

1. “Too many slides with too much text on them. ... The expectations for the midterm assignment could have been communicated more clearly. Providing students with a model assignment to go by (especially when you want it formatted a certain way) might make it clearer.”

The second time I taught this course, I simplified my lecture slides. I also made my expectations for exams clearer. Since for many of the students this was the first philosophy exam they had ever taken, they needed more explicit guidance from me about what I expected from them.

2. “Maybe we could use segments of the movie instead of the entire thing so that the overall density of the movie sessions and the lecture sessions even out a little bit.”

The second time I taught this course, I focused more on excerpts and shorter clips from movies.

3. “More discussion time.”

I addressed this issue by incorporating more discussion the next time I taught this course. The reduction in time spent watching movies (see the comment immediately above) also allowed for more discussion time.

4.4 PHIL 102: Introduction to Philosophy 2 (Spring 2013, UBC, enrolment in section: 23). Teaching Assistant/Discussion Section Leader.

Evaluations:

1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

The TA was helpful when I requested course-related assistance.	4.3/5
The TA was well-prepared for his or her duties.	4.2/5
The TA was readily available to me either through office hours or by appointment.	3/5
The TA communicated at an appropriate level for me.	4.5/5
The TA exhibited interest in the subject matter.	4.3/5
The TA showed knowledge of the subject matter.	4.3/5
The TA presented information clearly.	4.3/5
The TA was effective at stimulating interest in the subject matter.	4/5
The TA was receptive to a variety of perspectives and ideas.	4.5/5
The TA treated me and other students with equal respect.	4.7/5
The TA's comments on my written work were helpful.	4.2/5
The TA encouraged intelligent and independent thought.	4.2/5
The TA's evaluation of my work was fair and reasonable.	4.3/5
The TA made a very positive contribution to this course.	4/5

1= very poor, 2= poor, 3= neutral, 4= good, 5= very good

How would you rate the overall contribution of the TA to the course? 4/5

Student comments for this course emphasizing positive aspects of my teaching:

1. "His comments on my essays were helpful and constructive for improving my writing later on in the semester."

Examples of student comments that helped me improve my teaching:

1. “The fact that he could not physically attend any of the lectures was a little annoying. I felt that because of this, he wasn’t as connected with the course as the other TAs and maybe effected the effectiveness of our discussions.”

I was assigned to this course at the last minute and was unable to attend lectures due to other commitments. To compensate for this, I arranged with the instructor to listen to recordings of the lectures each week, in order to better prepare for my discussion sections. Although this worked well and I kept up with the lectures, this student’s comment reinforces for me the importance of maintaining an in-person connection with students.

4.5 PHIL 240: Knowledge and Reality 1 (Spring 2010, UBC, enrolment in section: 22). Teaching Assistant/Discussion Section Leader.

Evaluations:

1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

The TA was helpful when I requested course-related assistance.	4.4/5
The TA was well-prepared for his or her duties.	4.4/5
The TA was readily available to me either through office hours or by appointment.	5/5
The TA communicated at an appropriate level for me.	4.7/5
The TA exhibited interest in the subject matter.	4.8/5
The TA showed knowledge of the subject matter.	4.8/5
The TA presented information clearly.	4.2/5
The TA was effective at stimulating interest in the subject matter.	4.1/5
The TA was receptive to a variety of perspectives and ideas.	4.7/5
The TA treated me and other students with equal respect.	4.7/5
The TA's comments on my written work were helpful.	4.5/5
The TA encouraged intelligent and independent thought.	4.5/5
The TA's evaluation of my work was fair and reasonable.	4.8/5
The TA made a very positive contribution to this course.	4.4/5

1= very poor, 2= poor, 3= neutral, 4= good, 5= very good

How would you rate the overall contribution of the TA to the course?	4.6/5
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Student comments for this course emphasizing positive aspects of my teaching:

1. "Oisín was a great moderator for our tutorial discussions, and was consistently able to stimulate interest in the topics at hand. He was also able to simplify more difficult concepts, and aptly answered a variety of questions. He was also available on email to answer questions. I really enjoyed sitting in his discussion section."
2. "Not only very knowledgable and well-prepared, but also a talented teacher [who] communicates ideas in a way that is easy to understand."
3. "I thought he did a good job of explaining things. The question sheets he sometimes prepared for class were helpful."

4. “Very helpful and considerate. Lets us know what to focus on through discussion questions, and responds to emails fast.”

Examples of student comments that helped me improve my teaching:

1. “I was pleased that Oisín took stock of the fact that the initial discussion format wasn’t working out too well after the first couple of weeks (i.e., having us split into groups and discuss for a longer period) and changed the style to a more back and forth question and answer, directed discussion.”

In future classes and discussion sections, I endeavoured to maintain a more natural back-and-forth discussion.

2. “Oisín is a very friendly and helpful person and was an excellent TA. He tried hard to spark interest in our discussion group. It is possible that he sets the bar too high regarding the amount of material he wants to get through in one hour. However, he doesn’t let his plan for the lesson interfere with the natural flow of question and discussion that is really beneficial to the class. He is always respectful of students and has no problem taking his own time talking to students (even when he doesn’t have to).”

When planning future discussion sections and classes, I reduced the amount of material I planned to get through to a more manageable level for the students, while still maintaining high academic standards.

4.6 PHIL 230: Introduction to Moral Theory (Spring 2009, UBC, total enrolment in sections: 42). Teaching Assistant/Discussion Section Leader.

Evaluations:

1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

The TA was helpful when I requested course-related assistance.	4.5/5
The TA was well-prepared for his or her duties.	4.5/5
The TA was readily available to me either through office hours or by appointment.	4.5/5
The TA communicated at an appropriate level for me.	4.2/5
The TA exhibited interest in the subject matter.	4.4/5
The TA showed knowledge of the subject matter.	4.4/5
The TA presented information clearly.	4.2/5
The TA was effective at stimulating interest in the subject matter.	4/5
The TA was receptive to a variety of perspectives and ideas.	4.2/5
The TA treated me and other students with equal respect.	4.5/5
The TA's comments on my written work were helpful.	4/5
The TA encouraged intelligent and independent thought.	4.2/5
The TA's evaluation of my work was fair and reasonable.	4/5
The TA made a very positive contribution to this course.	4/5

1= very poor, 2= poor, 3= neutral, 4= good, 5= very good

How would you rate the overall contribution of the TA to the course?	4.4/5
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Student comments for this course emphasizing positive aspects of my teaching:

1. "I enjoyed his tutorials, he was interested in hearing what the opinions of other students was. He also prepared us well for the midterms."
2. "He's one of the best TAs I've ever had. Very clear and passionate. Also a fair marker. Goes above and beyond expectations of students."
3. "I think he's a really good TA. He definitely tries to the best of his ability to help students and always articulates things as clearly as possible."

4. “Really great TA, helpful and seemed to sincerely care about whether students understood the material and questions. Loved the review sheet for the midterm.”
5. “TA was really good, always came by to address everyone in the class personally and to bounce ideas off him. Stimulated thoughts that were relevant to the course material we were learning.”
6. “Very helpful and understanding. Communicated lecture topics clearly so that it was easier understood. Wanted the best for his students.”

Examples of student comments that helped me improve my teaching:

1. “At times, there were minor inconsistencies in details between the TA and Professor in regards to some of the course content/format.”

In later sections, I have tried to keep the content of discussion in line with what is being covered in lectures, while nevertheless not stifling interesting trains of thought and discussion.

2. “Perhaps more constructive criticism on the papers.”

This is something I have taken major steps to improve. I now incorporate both peer-review of papers and substantial instructor comments on draft of students’ papers before final submission.

3. “There could of been more discussion and less independent group work, but I am not sure if that is a TA decision.”

I now try to strike a balance between breaking students into groups for discussion and having a more inclusive discussion involving the whole section. Often I ask students which they think would be more useful at a given time.