Statement on Teaching Experience and Goals

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Since I began teaching Philosophy, my central goal has been to encourage students to move beyond comprehension of the material in a given course to reading more on their own and connecting their course work with personal aspirations. For undergraduates in introductory courses, this often means cultivating recognition that philosophical themes and questions are of intrinsic importance to life beyond the classroom. For some who are discovering and formulating scholarly interests, it means making connections between new ideas and arguments introduced in a given course and issues in which they are already interested and have some knowledge; the student's own inquiry and independent research may grow from these links. For example, I helped one senior discover the large literature on democratic theory while preparing for prestigious fellowships and law school applications; this field was new to him and changed his planned research focus. Many of the undergraduate courses I teach connect with other disciplines outside Philosophy -- from Psychology to Politics, Economics, Law and Religion -- which helps broaden the appeal of our course offerings. I encourage students from other majors to bring their expertise into the discussion; I also tailor final paper topics to each student's specific interests. This approach has encouraged creative research by undergraduates, helped to bring students into the Philosophy major, and allowed more students in other majors to combine their interests with philosophical studies. But most importantly, this approach has helped many students discover what they want to pursue and go on to excellent graduate programs and myriad important jobs.

I enjoy teaching courses across the spectrum, from introductory core courses (e.g. sophomore Ethics, which I have taught on a regular basis) to advanced graduate seminars. I work with students individually on advanced projects, giving extensive feedback on papers (examples available), and being available for discussion outside of class. I have directed numerous undergraduate tutorials, senior theses, and internships (including some for the Environmental Studies capstone requirement). I contribute to programs and initiatives with new courses and revised syllabi. For example, I have twice taught our Honors senior seminar, which included an overnight field trip to Gettysburg. I also went through the rigorous process of creating four new courses for the college-wide category dubbed "values" capstone courses (introduced in 1999), which are taken by seniors across a broad range of majors, as well as serving the Philosophy major. These include my course on American political philosophy from the Federalist Papers to Lincoln; a seminar on Environmental Ethics that focuses on ethical evaluation of the largest-scale global problems; a course on social justice issues generated by group identity claims; and a course on Fantasy and Philosophy that focuses on ethical themes in fantasy literature. Unsurprisingly, that course proved very popular with seniors throughout the college and is in constant demand. In spring 2010, I taught a new Philosophy elective on Environmental Justice that also counts for Global Studies, and the first service-learning integrated section of our Philosophical Ethics course (service learning is a new initiative at Fordham). Most recently I have created a new course on Human Rights for our Honors program. These examples illustrate my efforts to find creative ways of serving new programs and college needs.
For our undergraduate Philosophy major, most of my work has gone into designing and offering a range of new electives. Such courses were needed when I began in 1998, because our offerings at our midtown campus were too narrow and, outside a few cases, too many of the course topics were stale or dry. I sought in particular to employ my interests in moral psychology in courses such as Philosophy of Emotions, Character and Commitment, and a recent course on Love, Care and Autonomy. I'm currently planning a new elective on Self-Deception and Weakness of Will that will be in the same genre, combining literature on *akrasia* and self-control with some recent work on the meaning of life and rival accounts of how self-deception is possible. My fall 2009 elective on problems in political libertarianism was designed to be relevant to the ongoing economic crisis. But I also designed new advanced seminars for the major in areas where we had no coverage; these more technically demanding courses include Free Will, Theories of Autonomy, and Contemporary Ethical Theory. I have not had the chance to repeat all of these new courses, since I have often tailored my offerings to other department needs. For example, after a few years at Fordham, I recognized that we needed an introductory-level logic class that would be more helpful to pre-law students, non-majors, and some math-shy majors than our standard Symbolic Logic course. Thus I created Logic and Critical Thinking, which includes not only sentential logic and some very basic predicate logic (e.g. syllogisms) but also informal fallacies, inductive argument forms (e.g. inference to the best explanation), matrix problems, moral argument, and cost-benefit analysis. It has continued to be offered by others since then. Similarly, I have taught several courses that students were either requesting (such as Existentialism) or that were needed to fulfill area requirements in our major, such as Modern Philosophy (which goes from Descartes to Kant's first *Critique*), and Philosophy of Religion.

Given such a diverse palette of prepared courses, I can be very flexible in teaching upper level electives in a number of areas, as well as introductory survey courses, or basic historical courses. I would have taught Existentialism and political philosophy courses more often, but we have other professors at Fordham who prefer to offer these courses, and I've been happy to defer to them since there are always other electives I'm interested in trying. In my view, the major is a team effort, and many Philosophy electives courses can also serve wider audiences beyond the major as well. Use of movies, literature, recent political issues, and themes from popular culture are ways of broadening student interest, but they have to be complemented with rigorous upper-level courses in contemporary areas and in the history of philosophy as well.

At the graduate level, I have been deeply involved at the later stages of our Ph.D. program. In twelve years at Fordham, I've served as reader for twenty-two finished dissertations and am currently directing three; and I'm on three other proposal committees. My graduate seminars have included Virtue Ethics, Kierkegaard, Care and Commitment, a graduate version of Free Will, Personal Autonomy, and a recent course that blends autonomy theory and conceptions of practical identity (titled Autonomy, Care, and Self). While these seminars have closely tracked my scholarly work, I have also twice taught a survey course that the department requires titled Modern Ethical Theories. At my suggestion, we have split this into two courses --- one to serve multiple masters programs (which I taught for the first time this spring), and a doctoral level survey of 20th Century Moral Theory. The most fulfilling result of these graduate courses has been seeing many students with backgrounds in continental philosophy discover potentially fruitful connections to recent work in analytic moral theory and moral psychology. For several, this has led to thesis topics that bridge traditional divides in our discipline -- something that is needed and that has proven very helpful on the job market as well.