

## Teaching Statement

My teaching philosophy is rooted in the belief that effective learning balances intuition and technical rigor. I strive to create courses where students feel the inherent appeal of philosophical theories while developing the skills to critically analyze and contribute to their evolution. This philosophy guides my approach to course design, teaching methods, and assessments, always informed by the latest pedagogical research.

Throughout my teaching career at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the University of Nebraska-Omaha, and Kansas State University, I have taught a wide range of courses, from introductory surveys like "Intro to Ethics" and "Meaning of Life" to specialized upper-level courses like "Ethical Theory", "Medical Ethics", and "Philosophy of Video Games." I was also entrusted with developing a new course, "Leadership Ethics in Practice," for UNO's Bachelor of Multidisciplinary Studies program. This breadth of experience has allowed me to refine my pedagogical techniques to engage students across diverse levels and interests.

My courses foster a "brainstorming" environment, encouraging students to actively engage with the material from the outset. In lower-level courses, I begin with discussions centered on student-formulated theses, while upper-level courses delve into reconstructing arguments in standard form. This approach cultivates critical thinking, writing skills, and thoughtful engagement with the texts. I am a strong advocate for scaffolding assignments, ensuring that students are appropriately challenged while building a strong foundation.

A unique aspect of my teaching is the explicit focus on identifying the intuitive motivations behind philosophical theories. I believe that uncovering these often unstated intuitions provides students with a solid starting point for understanding complex concepts. By illuminating the intuitive appeal of a theory, I find that students more readily grasp its technical aspects, leading to deeper comprehension and critical analysis.

Assessments are a cornerstone of my teaching practice. In both lower-level and upper-level courses, I structure assessments to promote deep learning and skill development. Lower-level courses emphasize fundamentals, with assignments focused on thesis writing and short papers that prioritize clarity and adherence to structure. Exams consist of a take-home portion, requiring students to create abstracts for readings, and an in-class portion leveraging generative AI to create morally challenging scenarios for on-the-spot analysis. This blended approach promotes thoughtful engagement with the readings while assessing critical thinking and application of ethical theories.

Upper-level courses shift towards argument reconstruction and critical analysis. Students regularly submit section summaries and new abstracts for readings, fostering in-depth engagement with complex texts. The single in-person exam requires students to adopt the viewpoint of a studied author and reconstruct their theory, promoting a nuanced understanding of philosophical perspectives. Instead of a second exam, students create visual representations of theories, encouraging creative thinking and alternative approaches to philosophical expression.

The effectiveness of my teaching is reflected in my strong track record of recruiting majors and minors to the philosophy department. I am also an active member of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers, staying abreast of pedagogical research and regularly collaborating with my department head

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to implement new strategies. I am committed to continuous improvement and am currently developing a free textbook for "Introduction to Ethics."

### **Conclusion**

I am a passionate and dedicated educator who thrives on fostering a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. My commitment to balancing intuition and rigor, coupled with innovative assessment strategies and a focus on student engagement, has proven effective in cultivating critical thinkers and lifelong learners. I am eager to continue my teaching journey, empowering students to explore the depths of philosophical inquiry while developing the skills necessary for success in their chosen paths.