

## **Teaching Philosophy, Experience, and Interests for:**

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### ***Teaching Philosophy***

It is my experience that many students bring to the classroom a monolithic experience relative to learning. By this I mean that they expect every question to have a single correct answer. They view their participation in the learning process as a matter of memorizing these answers. Textbooks are perceived as interchangeable – except perhaps in terms of the writing style of the author – and professors are seen as arbiters of this inventory of correct answers.

Students may have had their own exposure to the subject matter in both academic settings and experientially to varying degrees without having had the opportunity or guidance to examine the opinions and beliefs they have formed or to integrate the two domains. I believe it is the task of higher education to open the students' minds to the potential of various answers to the academic questions proposed, which may arise by virtue of differences in worldview or perspective. This variety of answers may be motivated by any number of factors - including a diversity of cultures or life experiences – any and all of which have equal psychological validity and claims to some status of truth value.

This awakening to the potential of more than one perspective may be accomplished in part through the use of more than one text for a given course or through the reading of a variety of materials by different authors. Similarities and differences in the treatment of the authors of a common topic should be examined, to the extent that the authors' interpretations of data or approaches to a problem do not agree.

The educator at this level should have the expertise within the discipline to guide the student in a process of knowledge construction and discovery and development, in such a manner that the student is able to make full productive use of the knowledge base already available. This growth in either a theoretical or applied environment as is appropriate to the student through a variety of assignments, which provide for flexibility in choice and in the way that students may address the topic.

Further, in working with the diverse population of a college, it is my role to establish an environment within the classroom, which allows for discussion and dissension - where students are given an opportunity to offer their views. A variety of materials should be presented whenever available, such as videos, guest speakers, and empirical studies which also may offer hypotheses at variance with the mainstream. Small group meetings and exercises requiring group cooperation should be a regular part of the classroom activities to allow for appropriate information exchange.