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Statement of Teaching Philosophy, *last updated 3/31/25*

My approach to teaching has been developed over eight years of teaching courses in public health, biostatistics, and media studies at three major universities. Additionally, my teaching philosophy is informed by eight years of professional public health and communication experience, from which I frequently draw examples. These examples make lesson materials more concrete and real-world oriented, which helps my students understand how to apply what they learn in the classroom to their career search, and even their personal lives.

I believe students learn best when they are motivated to learn on their own, so I make it a point to learn what each student cares about so that I can connect the course material to their interests. I make each student feel seen by tailoring class meetings so that we can discuss topics related to their career or subjects of interest. I also follow up on conversations in class, or on submitted work, with individualized further reading or materials that I'm confident the student will benefit from based on my understanding of their personal goals. As a result, I have had success in motivating even withdrawn or disinterested students to participate in class discussions, which has long term benefits for their education experience and their career after that.

Social and intellectual connection is at the core of my teaching approach, so I take into consideration the goals and idiosyncrasies of individual students. I encourage participation in many ways, including real time in-class survey tools, which allow all students to see each others' authentic responses without worrying about being identified or confronted. This method also allows me to assess students' attitudes and knowledge regarding the course material. I encourage my students to bring their personal and work experiences to class discussions as well, as my subject areas are heavily woven into the fabric of daily life. I also employ teachbacks by having students explain concepts to the class through the lens of their own experiences.

I also am sensitive to the needs of students who may be underprepared in terms of foundational skills needed to succeed in coursework. I typically refer these students to university resources like tutoring centers and libraries, and also offer individualized support in office hours to try and bring students up to speed when possible. However, I also believe in holding students to high standards - if a student is missing foundational building blocks, it is often in their best interest to revisit those concepts in a different course rather than

struggling to keep up in a more advanced one. Walking the line between accommodating students' individual needs and setting professional expectations for them is a challenge most teachers face, and it is one that I take seriously.

Teaching communication and public health requires students to see the bigger picture. Understanding theories and the minutiae of statistical analysis are of course critical, but I believe it's more productive to foster an understanding of the arc of development leading to the foundational theories and techniques in the field. I frequently bring my class discussions back to "the bigger picture" with questions like "why does this matter today?" or "how do you think this impacts our lives now?" My feedback on students' work also often pushes them to think critically about how a piece of information connects with or fits into the course material and the subject at large. These moments allow students to build necessary connections between what is abstract and what is tangible in their everyday lives. This effort was especially rewarding when I started a data visualization workshop while earning my masters degree, and was able to empower eight students to build research projects with personal significance that they then were able to present at national professional conferences.

A danger in having a long teaching career is that the ability to connect with students will decrease as the teacher ages out of the students' cohort. As a teaching assistant during my PhD, I have started to feel an age gap where before there was almost none. While my previous teaching approaches relied on a collegial atmosphere, as I grow as a teacher I realize I have to find different ways to connect with students and bring them out of their shells. As a full time researcher on top of my academic pursuits, I am constantly connected to new information about current events, the interests of younger generations, and the developments in the field of public health and communication. Maintaining connections to this kind of leverageable information while continuing to prioritize building connections between students' interests and my subjects will allow me to grow as a teacher and continue motivating students.

teaching references, as well as peer and student feedback is available upon request