

### The Why

The most salient reason I teach is personal. Of all the comments I have received from students, there is one which I believe sums this up quite well: "It shows he truly loves teaching." I thrive on the challenge of making clear difficult but important issues to my students. Yet what I find most worthwhile in my vocation is the engagement I have with my students. Teaching, for me, is a quintessentially personal affair. More than merely guiding them as they work to comprehend readings and to formulate their own ideas, the act of teaching, as I see it, expresses a unique human relation. Emmanuel Levinas suggests in *Totality and Infinity* that teaching does not operate as a maieutic. I agree. I do not see myself as midwife, in other words, holding students' ideas in hand, judging whether or not these are substantial or just wind. Rather I am - with my students - engaged in working through significant problems that have living meaning *for us both*. This reciprocal relationship is the source of my love of teaching. No matter how high my expectations and no matter how strict the discipline I may maintain in the classroom, I always seek to create an environment of seriousness and devotion to the fundamental problems at hand. This is something to which my students genuinely respond, and it is this aspect of my vocation that I honestly love.

### Past, Present, and Future

I have extensive experience teaching undergraduates. Since defending my dissertation I have held two distinct positions, both here at the University of Kentucky. I was hired in 2007 as a Lecturer of Philosophy and promoted in 2012 to Senior Lecturer. As lecturer, I taught a 3-3 load, all at the undergraduate 100 to 300 level. During my first years teaching as a lecturer, I taught our large introductory logic course, the philosophy of biology, and courses related to social and political philosophy. Once the Environmental and Sustainability Studies major was approved by our University Senate, my teaching duties shifted from an emphasis on logic to that of environmental philosophy. I designed our Environmental Ethics and our Food Ethics course here at UK, both of which are UK Core courses. This spring I will teach The History and Philosophy of Ecology, a course of my own design, for the second time. Though currently an experimental course I intend to seek approval by our Senate to make this course a regular offering in philosophy.

The Environmental and Sustainability Studies program here at UK, of which I was a principal architect, received final Senate approval in 2013. My work in this program facilitated my promotion in 2014 to the rank of Assistant Professor of Philosophy. This promotion has allowed me to teach at the 500 level and above, i.e., to teach classes at the graduate and undergraduate level. Currently, for instance, I am teaching an advanced ethics course titled "Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic: Appraisals." Since we have a demand for phenomenological studies at the graduate level, I tend to focus my undergraduate teaching on environmental philosophy and my graduate level course work on the advanced study of phenomenology. Last fall, for instance, I taught my first graduate seminar on Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations*.

ENVR 205: Art, Nature, and Culture appeals to me, particularly. One thing I would do particularly in this class would be to introduce students to the work of Wendell Berry, in whom I have an abiding interest. To my mind, no other writer combines in their corpus the themes of art, nature, and culture as poignantly as does Berry. Consequently, his essays, poetry, and fiction would have a distinctive place in the class. Specifically, I would like to examine the agricultural practices prevalent on the Eastern Shore, particularly industrial chicken farming in Delmarva region, in light of the concept of sustainable

agricultural advanced by Berry. In short, if I were to teach at Salisbury, I would be very interested to continue the sort of course work that I have developed here at UK. I am adept at all phases of the course design and implementation process and can be flexible to any future needs of the Environmental Studies Program that may arise at Salisbury.

My teaching interests revolve around the intersection of philosophy and ecology. A preeminent concern of mine is the human place in nature. My scholarly approach is inherently interdisciplinary in character. Of special importance to my research and my teaching, for instance, are figures as diverse as the philosophers, Hans Jonas and Val Plumwood, the forester and conservationist, Aldo Leopold, the farmer and writer, Wendell Berry, and the geneticist, Richard Lewontin. To quote from Aldo Leopold, "there are two things that interest me; the relationship of people to each other, and the relationship of people to land." If I were to come to Salisbury, my work would center on these relations.

### **The Art of Teaching**

At the undergraduate level, I teach classes at different levels differently. Typically, I teach the highest level courses as, what I term, writing courses. My Aldo Leopold class is an example of this style of course. A 500 level course, it is composed of graduate and advanced undergraduate philosophy students as well as juniors or seniors in our Environmental and Sustainability Studies and our Natural Resource and Environmental Studies programs. Over the course of the semester, students will write 11 short reflection pieces, i.e., papers no longer than one sheet of paper, front and back. Each of these short pieces is graded according to a rubric, the aim of which is centered on developing the skill of clear, concise, and elegant writing. The grading criteria for these pieces are five: (i) precision of exposition, (ii) coherence of argument, (iii) sufficiency of presentation, (iv) philosophical merit, and (v) elegance of writing style. Additionally, there is a midterm thesis defense paper of 5-7 pages and a final thesis paper of 10-14 pages. The motto of the class is: "good writing is rewriting." So students are encouraged to incorporate their short "experimental" pieces into their longer thesis defense papers.

In my lower level courses, I typically ask students to write a midterm and a final exam as well as a thesis defense paper. My environmental ethics class is a good example of this style of class. The midterm is composed of short answer and longer essay questions. Students are given a study guide which contains a larger set of short answer questions, usually about eight to ten, and a set of essay questions, usually three. They are asked to write between three to five of these short answer questions and one essay question in class. The final exam has two components: (i) an in class exam similar in structure to the midterm, and (ii) a comprehensive take-home final essay exam. I announce the comprehensive final exam essay question on the first day of class and we discuss its meaning over the course of the term. The thesis defense paper in these lower level classes is actually a complex assignment composed of four distinct assignments: first, a short articulation of their thesis question and tentative statement of thesis, later, a refined thesis statement and working outline of the paper, then, a working draft and outline of the draft paper, and, finally, an optional final draft of the paper. The aim of this style of class is writing development and reading comprehension within the discipline. I believe strongly that philosophy can provide students with a definite set of skills: the ability to read inherently difficult texts comprehendingly and the skill of writing clearly and coherently. All my course assignments are geared toward developing these skills.

Included below are syllabi for the two courses I am teaching this semester:

1. Environmental Ethics
2. Advanced Ethics: Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic - Appraisals