

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT:

As a student, I always thought that it was the teacher's role to ensure that students learn. My philosophy of teaching has changed drastically now that I am at the front of the classroom. I am now more aware of the diversity of students in undergraduate classrooms, and their varied abilities and motivations in pursuing an undergraduate degree. I recognize now that my role as teacher is to provide an environment in which all students *can* learn, but that it is the student's role to actually learn. My philosophy is that **learning should be student-driven**, and that as a teacher, I must **foster enthusiasm for new knowledge in my students, while simultaneously teaching them the skills to seek out that new knowledge on their own.**

Training in anthropology, as part of a well-rounded social science curriculum, gets students to ask the question "what does it mean to be human" and think deeply about what that question means, and the myriad ways that social scientists go about answering it. Only a small number of undergraduate anthropology students will go on to become academics; the vast majority will work in industry, government, health care, and many other fields that contribute to society. My goal is to teach both of these groups of students, which means designing challenging, content-driven classes that also build broad transferable skills including intellectual independence, critical thinking, teamwork, and written communication.

Student-driven learning, with opportunities for feedback. In all classes, but particularly in my introductory class (200-level), I use formative assessment so that students can gauge their own learning throughout the semester and identify problem areas. At the end of each class, several sample/review questions are provided so that students know what future test questions will look like and how much they have retained. I also provide regular opportunities for students to be proactive about their classroom experience and tell me

what is working and not working for them. In each of my courses I hand out an evaluation during the second week of class where students can give me feedback and provide me with an opportunity to get to know them better. I do this early in the semester so that their feedback can be addressed immediately, and before assessment has begun.

Providing authentic learning experiences for all types of learners. I am careful to include different modes of learning in my classes so that students can take advantage of their areas of strength. My advanced classes on the fossil record include laboratory sections to give students a more visual hands-on approach to the course material. Instead of lecture that day, students move between stations examining fossil casts and bones and answering a short assignment that is designed to get students to *look* at fossils and make their own observations, rather than simply memorize what the fossils are supposed to look like. I design writing assignments that replicate the types of activities that real anthropologists engage in: writing grants and proposals, peer-reviewing the writing of fellow students, and learning to write for the public.

Collaboration between students. I believe it is important for students to learn to work together. I provide opportunities for student collaboration in laboratory sessions, which are always done in groups; with writing assignments, where working with partners or teams is always an option; and through fostering in-classroom discussions. The feedback that I have received is that almost all students find working in groups rewarding, particularly in laboratory sections. This gets students to discuss what they are learning and allows them to work together to uncover answers and discover new knowledge.

Teaching writing skills. In my opinion, it is critical that all students graduating with a bachelor's degree be able to communicate effectively in writing. In my senior-level classes I assign students to work in pairs on research papers and have students critique each other's first drafts as part of the assignment. This teaches students to work together on writing assignments and to respond to feedback and constructive criticism from peers – both valuable skills for the workplace.

Fundamentally, my primary goal when teaching is to motivate students to **think critically about what they are learning, and understand not just what we know, but why we know it.** My classes are content-heavy, and while I expect students to know the facts, it is more important that they understand the context and rationale behind them.

Most of my classes are relatively large, and a substantial part of the course material is presented in lecture format. Lectures are efficient, but not all students learn best through passive listening and note taking. In addition to offering hands-on learning opportunities through **lab sessions**, I also use **handouts** and **encourage student participation** during lectures to ensure effective learning for all students.

TEACHING NARRATIVE - RATIONALE:

I am a biological anthropologist who studies the fossil record of humans and primates. In my field we use all of the same research methods as paleontologists but address questions that are fundamentally anthropological in nature – understanding why humans look and behave the way we do. This blend of the biological and social sciences provides both opportunities and challenges when teaching.

I came to the University of Calgary specifically to teach paleoanthropology to undergraduate students, including both Anthropology majors and students taking these courses as electives. I routinely teach three different classes: Introduction to Primatology and Human Evolution (ANTH 201), which is our department's foundational course in biological anthropology; Human Evolution (ANTH 309), which is a survey of the human fossil record since our lineage split from chimpanzees seven million years ago; and Primate Evolution (ANTH 505.1), an advanced course focusing on the 65 million year record of non-human primate evolution.

Because my courses generally focus on the evolution of our own species, it is easy to engage students in the 'big questions' such as why other human relatives such as Neanderthals go extinct or why humans appear to be so different than other mammals, particularly in our behaviour and cognitive abilities. However, in order to be able to address these questions, students need to know the basic facts – what the fossil record and comparative studies can and cannot tell us about human evolution. Since this typically involves a survey of the fossil record of humans and/or primates my classes are relatively content-heavy. In addition, while these courses are taught as anthropology courses through the Faculty of Arts, they are fundamentally science courses. This can be challenging for students with limited background in the biological sciences.

The challenge is finding the balance between the two types of knowledge – letting students develop creative and exciting ideas about how humans evolved while also engaging them in the details – the who, what, where, and when that forms the basic data of any historical science. This also provides an opportunity to get students **thinking holistically and to understand how scientific ideas connect back to data, which I believe is a core concept for students in the social sciences.**

I am passionate about my field of research and fortunate that **paleoanthropology is an engaging subject** that draws a variety of students from across the university. Fundamentally, we are all interested in understanding human nature and how we came to be as we are. Paleoanthropology is a great way to **engage students** who always thought that they disliked 'science', to teach them about basic **evolutionary theory**, and to get them to **think critically about the science that they see online and in the news.**