

STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

BALDVIN EINARSSON

I have taught mathematics at my former school, the Reykjavik Junior College, at UC Santa Barbara and Bridgewater State University. I have a teaching degree, which involved teaching and taking several pedagogy classes. I was also fortunate to have Birgir Guðjónsson, an experienced teacher, sit in on my lectures and take notes, which we discussed after class. This practical experience and feedback while taking pedagogy courses has given me a chance to develop my teaching philosophy, execute it in the classroom, and sharpen my skills to become a more effective and organized educator. My main focus is teaching students how to learn effectively on their own, and to understand what it means to have learned some concept. I listen to students and encourage them to discuss the material amongst themselves. I am dedicated and friendly, and I want to make learning a positive, meaningful and fun experience for all.

My classes are well organized, and include a realistic, yet flexible schedule for the concepts to be covered, along with the nature and quantity of homework. I take great care in preparing for each lecture, so that I can maintain a moderate and steady pace. I like creating an online site (e.g. on Moodle) where I upload all course documents including syllabus, homework, my own hand written lecture notes and all other supplemental materials. Students appreciate being well informed and many enjoy getting information from the Internet. I also try to find relevant and fun examples and projects, such as carving a wooden unfair dice. By recording the outcomes we learn about the Law of Large Numbers, probability distributions and expected values. My own research in class has been a good source of examples. I am very interested in and open to new teaching methods, e.g. “Flipping the classroom,” and in the development of “Inquiry-based learning” courses, and I constantly seek ways to become a better instructor from when I first started my teaching degree.

I realize how well you prepared me for my courses now. I really appreciate how clear your board work was and how you took care in timing each lecture perfectly... - Personal email from former student, 2013

One of my main goals in teaching is for students to develop study and organizational skills. The skills needed to solve mathematical problems are the same ones which make them successful individuals in other academic or social aspects of their lives. I want them to become independent learners and develop critical thinking skills. This requires that students focus on understanding the material. To this end, I devote considerable time discussing studying techniques, and how to approach the subject. I have written a document called “*How to read and learn mathematics - Math as a new language*,” on how to best focus their studies. I encourage students to talk to each other outside the classroom and explain problems to

each other. When students can describe their thoughts with their own words, verbally and in writing, the concepts are clear in their minds and the understanding is deeper than before. I also hand out a short document with some general notes on how to prepare for and take the final exam. I emphasize some good techniques for taking tests, hoping that it will alleviate stress and as a result improve their performance.

I find it important to maintain a friendly and cheerful, yet professional attitude in the classroom, and I strive to create a personal connection with the students. I encourage them to contact me if they have any questions, and my readiness to answer their questions and emails makes them feel listened to. I also want my students to come to my office hours, where I like to ask them to explain the problem in their own words, listening carefully to them. By doing so, I can often find out what they are struggling with and can effectively guide them towards a deeper understanding. Communicating directly with students I find to be an invaluable teaching tool.

To conclude, I aim to create a friendly and relaxed environment for students, to let them best achieve their goals. I listen to my students and guide them towards a higher understanding. Students benefit from clear goals and organization, which I do my best to provide them with. It has been my experience that students find enjoyment in doing their work if the teacher has high hopes and demands hard work, while being fair, respectful, and open to suggestions. When students have positive attitudes, they are more easily motivated and as a result have a greater chance of succeeding.

Sincerely,
Baldvin Einarsson