

The goals for any course that I teach are common regardless of the content. They are to do my best to teach and engage each student regardless of their prior abilities. I will reciprocate to them the education they desire by assisting them through listening and taking time to help them to take their learning as far as they want. I believe that this should be delivered in an interactive way that conveys a message of mutual respect and builds confidence and critical thinking capabilities while focusing on the positive. I aim to accomplish this by prompting interaction among the students and myself through discussion and problem solving activities which demonstrates that each student has valuable insight pertaining to the topic regardless of previous experience. I enjoy this part, as I am also learning from the students by listening to their differing viewpoints and experiences.

My teaching strategy typically follows a dual approach that “lets the students see the lecture” as well as become a part of it. What I mean by seeing the lecture is that, in a traditional setting, the lecture consists of demonstrations, examples, and visuals that show the subject in use, as opposed to just telling the students what to expect when it is used or how to apply it. I believe that it is important to follow the required readings with demonstrations to allow students with diverse learning styles to all succeed and also to keep the environment exciting. In an online setting I have accomplished this through using a variety of delivery methods for each topic including videos of demonstrations.

To accomplish the second part of my approach, to let students become a part of the lecture process, I will frequently pause and allow the students to assist me in completing specific ideas within the demonstration. In an online setting this is done through encouraging and giving students the opportunity to have dialogue among each other to help each other out with my minimal guidance in the form of support. I always am receptive and open to student’s ideas during this part and feel that it is important to let them know that I value their voice and that, even if they are incorrect, they are capable of producing the correct answer or a valuable piece of the puzzle.

Since the answers to the questions that I ask may have never been presented to them in one place or explicitly stated anywhere, I expect a high degree of critical thinking to take place so that they can find the answers on their own and apply the knowledge from a variety of situations to solve a problem. My belief is that the specific information about a subject in which the students obtain in school is not nearly as important as the skills and abilities that are developed to enable them to solve any problem.

Many students do not know how to apply their ability to find answers using common resources or their ability to critically think to a complex topic. I feel that it is my job to make sure they learn how to and have the confidence to do so by the end of the course. Once again, this is accomplished through interaction and letting the students work out, with their classmates and myself, the step by step critical thought process needed to solve a specific problem. I always emphasize that there may be more than one path to reach the end. I will stop and pause after each step is told to me by the student to allow other students or myself to demonstrate alternative methods to accomplish the task. This helps the student understand that they may not be wrong even if someone else has told them that another way of doing something is right, building confidence and curiosity. By the end of the semester, I see the students leaving my courses being more outspoken, confident, and better able to solve a wide array of problems without asking for help.