

Philosophy of Teaching Statement

It is the last day of the semester. Papers are being shuffled and the sound of flash drives clinking against the desks is permeating the room. Today, students are presenting and defending their final project: their recommendation to solve a real marketing segmentation and target marketing and/or communications challenge faced by a small business or nonprofit. I am so excited (and anxious!) for them. A quote from one of my favorite authors, Theodor Seuss Geisel, springs to mind: "Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So...get on your way."

As I watch their problem-solving skills in action as they creatively apply what they have learned during our few months together, I wonder how these students are different from the first day of class. How did we get here?

At the beginning of each term, I convey to the class my main goal for this *Principles of Marketing* course, which is to foster their problem-solving skills in real-world business and marketing situations. We discuss that by working together in our inclusive, welcoming environment, they will: (1) explain the significance of key marketing terms and concepts in a variety of marketing situations; (2) analyze real-world marketing challenges faced by a company or a brand; (3) identify and utilize resources (blogs, publications, podcasts, etc.) for marketing information, illustrations, and current events to further learning; and (4) devise and evaluate a market segmentation and target marketing, and/or a communications plan. To their incredulous, quizzical looks, I chuckle and say, "That's okay. 'Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast!'" (*Lewis Carroll*, author of my favorite book, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*)

For many students, the instructor's enthusiasm about the course material is a key motivator for learning. I am endeared by Dr. Seuss' creativity, imagination, and fun. In my *Principles of Marketing* course, I strive to be enthusiastic, interesting, open, and accessible in an effort to help engage students in their learning. Marketing lends itself to this approach. Marketing is an exciting, interdisciplinary activity and an area in which I am very passionate and enthusiastic. The course combines lively, engaging, fun, and informative sessions, group discussions, presentations, case studies, guest lectures, and small group work to stimulate interest in the material and to help the students synthesize details into a bigger picture.

"I like nonsense; it wakes up the brain cells." (*Theodor Seuss Geisel*)

Nothing engenders student learning like beginning the class with a rousing "WHASSUP?!" Where appropriate, I introduce ideas using stories and humor to help peak interest and reduce anxiety. Take the advertising section, for instance. A class favorite. During class, students enjoy watching advertisements such as Canal+'s award-winning spot, "The Bear", Volkswagen's "The Force", the Budweiser frogs,

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Subaru “Love”, Budweiser's "Whassup?", and a unique selection based on the groups' background and personal interests. At their conclusion, we collectively discuss the ads from a strategic perspective: target audience, positioning, engagement, and the ad's ability to build the brand. The Budweiser frogs definitely made sure people remembered the brand's name, Bud. Weis. Er, but how may I help the students recall both the material and how their learning objectives relate to the assigned tasks?

“Help students contextualize new information and retain and apply material.” (Barbara Gross Davis)
To help students succeed, the course syllabus articulates clear learning objectives, specific deadlines for assignments, and requirements for evaluation so the students know exactly what they must do and when. With these concise directives, I hope to eliminate confusion and increase motivation by also explaining how I may help them along the way. Most importantly, the syllabus outlines rules for respectful classroom participation and engagement so we may all learn in a nurturing, trusting, and open environment.

In my approach, I hope to convey my passion, professional experiences, and commitment to their success and growth. As this introductory course forms the foundation for advanced marketing courses, I must help them acquire requisite knowledge. Reading and homework assignments are augmented by informative class discussions and presentations intertwined with stories from my professional experience to communicate marketing concepts to the group. Such informal self-disclosure has the concomitant benefit of increasing student engagement and helping the students feel I am approachable. To help with recall and continuity, each class begins by having a student summarize the main points from the prior class. To help manage expectations of what's ahead, the day's plan is presented to the class. (as illustrated on slide 2 of the Lesson on Product Positioning PowerPoint slide deck) At different points in the course, I ask students to demonstrate mastery by answering questions or showing what they have learned.

Pivotal to the teaching process is having an accurate assessment of how much of the material the student understands. To gauge their ability to explain the significance of key marketing terms and concepts, I have adopted two assessment techniques from one of my favorite undergraduate marketing professors: in-class, open-note, homework-turned-pop quizzes, and an essay question mid-term examination, which the students are able to prepare in advance. The homework-turned-pop quiz speaks to Walvoord's approach of “creating incentives for students to do “first exposure” work (for instance, reading) before they come to class, so that class time can be used for discussion, practice, and feedback.”

I believe that hands-on activities provide a bridge between abstract and concrete learning and can aid in the students' development of a more complex approach to learning. Incorporating a collaborative, hands-on approach to learning in the curriculum facilitates the student's intrinsic understanding of the material.

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Through both the business case studies and the Marketing Project, students learn how to creatively apply course information in analyzing real-world marketing scenarios. Working both independently and in small groups, students examine the case prior to class in order to prepare for an in-class discussion and/or presentation. Students are asked to explain and defend their positions on the issues raised by the case, sometimes in a role-playing scenario. Although I may pose a thought-provoking, open-ended, follow-up question to help explain their answer(s), my role is the facilitator, guiding the discussion to a logical conclusion. What I found makes the case study exercise particularly interesting is, while it's under discussion, presenting new details and revelations to which the students must immediately reflect and respond. This way, students experience first-hand what it's like in a typical, fluid business scenario. In the Red Bull case study, for instance, students learn that Red Bull faces mounting competitive pressure. While discussing the case, students are presented with new information of Coca-Cola Company's competitive response to Red Bull's promotions. Coca-Cola has a strong brand and vast resources. Now what? Students are asked to formulate a well-reasoned argument on how Red Bull should react to these competitive challenges. This adds a fascinating dynamic to the class and affords students the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the context of a real-world situation. This exercise also helps prepare students for the Marketing Project, another hands-on activity that inspires creative applications of the material and promotes problem-solving.

Having students engage with the material is an important part of the learning process. According to research in active learning, students learn more and retain their learning longer if they acquire it in an active manner. The Marketing Project incorporates experiential learning and opportunities for reflection (as described on page seven of the [course syllabus](#)). Students apply course material in a tangible, meaningful way by devising a market segmentation and target marketing, and/or a communications plan that will help a small business owner or a nonprofit solve their marketing challenge. As this is a big undertaking, milestone checks are incorporated into the course. I provide prompt, thorough feedback on each draft outline to ensure the students are on the right track before submitting their final paper.

Throughout the term, in fact, I give positive, immediate feedback to students to reinforce their learning.

I follow Fink's model of FIDeLity feedback (Frequent, Immediate, Discriminating, Loving) and comment positively about students' contributions and paraphrase good points. Students are congratulated for their learning and achievements and shown how to learn from their mistakes. There are no exclamations of "*Off with his head!*"; I model the appropriate, respectful behavior outlined in the [course syllabus](#) during class discussions and on class discussion boards. In fact, feedback, evaluations of student progress, and instruction are developed with the students' unique learning styles in mind.

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"You are you. Now, isn't that pleasant?" (Theodor Seuss Geisel)

Every student is unique and learns differently. Believing in the differentiation of instruction, I must find a way of reaching each student so he/she may learn the material and have their opportunity to shine. Some people often employ more than one strategy for learning and communicating. In designing the course, I must do my best to remember to design it for the learner, not for the delivery system (interactive lecture, case study, etc.). As my goal is to meet the needs (Visual, Auditory, Read/write, and Kinesthetic) of each type of learner a couple of times per topic, I incorporate a variety of instructional delivery methods, such as in the aforementioned advertising session, where components of the activity address different learning styles and preferences. This approach follows the theory that learning is more thorough and is retained better if multiple modes are used to input and process information.

As an instructor, it is imperative to create a learning environment that affords students the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. Having teachers and students learn about each other is an important prerequisite for teaching effectively, promoting student learning, and having an engaging, positive classroom environment. It helps everyone feel at ease with each other and build connections in the new classroom setting. To learn about my students and to help everyone have a meaningful first interaction with each other, some of the strategies I employ are learning and using students' names and background, sharing in-class "getting know you" oral and/or written assignments, and facilitating student engagement in the classroom. Knowing the students' backgrounds and interests enable me to make the marketing concept discussions and assignments more relevant, thus more interesting and engaging for the students, motivating them to learn. Throughout the semester, I demonstrate my interest in the students' learning, so they each feel valued and important, with the aim of creating a sense of belonging. This helps me in my quest to create interactions which foster interest and understanding.

Social interactions and discourse facilitate learning and motivation. Candid, open dialogue is encouraged in my classroom. Fostering ongoing discourse and supporting meaningful class discussion throughout the semester may encourage and enhance learning and work towards creating a classroom community in which the students continue to get to know each other better and feel welcome. Opening up discussion topics on marketing theories and creating collaborative learning experiences may help accomplish this goal. The classroom's positive atmosphere enables the group to think more creatively. I endeavor to have the students feel that they are valued members of a community.

In my class, we all learn from each other. I value each student's unique background and experiences, and I am open to the wisdom and experiences they bring to the discussions. I encourage them to teach me as I

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teach them. We should all enjoy making unexpected discoveries and surprise each other with our individual epiphanies. Throughout the semester, “we keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.” This quote from Walt Disney speaks true for the students, as their semester's learning culminates in their Marketing Project, and for me as I further develop my teaching.

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." (Theodor Seuss Geisel)

Learning is a part of my life. I have an insatiable curiosity, an appetite, for learning new things. I will use my commitment to lifelong learning to continually expand my teaching pedagogy and marketing knowledge to improve my teaching skills so I may be an effective educator for my students. Specifically, I will continue my learning in student engagement theories and best practices and incorporate findings into my curriculum. I will work diligently to improve my instructional methodologies so I may bring new and creative techniques into the classroom. Enrolling in the Higher Education Consortium of Central Massachusetts' "Certificate in College Teaching" program is the first step in my journey. Participating in workshops and professional meetings, reading academic journals, and the like will also be beneficial—and reflective—as I seek professional improvement to grow and develop further as a teacher.

Learning from others is important. I look to my network of teaching peers for learning moments and ideas. Colleagues across disciplines and visits to other classrooms can provide ideas on presenting material and incorporating learning styles and academic technology into the course.

All learners need practice, feedback, and review. This includes me. Student and peer evaluations can provide valuable information on techniques that worked well and aspects of the class that can be improved. In reviewing my peer and student evaluations, I will reflect on their feedback and refine my course where appropriate. Through classroom assessment activities (CATs), I can learn ways to improve my teaching and the students' learning process. Throughout the semester, CATs will be administered so I may understand the depth and pace of student understanding and adjust my teaching strategies to better assist in their learning. (please refer to the Course Schedule, which begins on page 9 of the syllabus) These modifications to the lesson plan will also be incorporated in future courses.

Marketing is dynamic. Staying abreast of emerging trends and the latest thinking in the field of marketing will enhance my ability to contribute positively to class. Continuously looking for new teaching material in the subject, such as Harvard Business Review Case Studies, will help keep the course fresh.

I endeavor to have a vibrant, productive, and memorable course. Continuous learning is an essential

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ingredient to my effectiveness as a teacher of marketing. “One of the deep secrets of life is that all that is really worth doing is what we do for others.” (*Lewis Carroll*) This is why I teach.