

Sarah M. Brown

Science Center 120
Southern Utah University
Cedar City, UT 84720
(435) 856-8173
brown_s@suu.edu

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Teaching is one of the most difficult yet rewarding endeavors. In my years as both a teacher and a student, several areas have stood out as core components of teaching that excels.

- **Enthusiasm**
- **Expectations**
- **Professionalism**
- **Knowledge**
- **Student-Teacher Relationships**

My high school math teacher never mentioned his favorite subject in an ordinary tone of voice. Rather, with an intense look of pleasure on his face, he reverently pronounced in a slow, deep voice, "Geometry." His obvious love for geometry made complaining much harder and enjoyable learning much easier for students. Enthusiasm is highly contagious, which makes it a vital ingredient in quality teaching.

High expectations are extremely important because students perform to the level expected of them. The duration of a challenging course may be painful, but watering down a course leaves students under-prepared for future classes.

There are standards of professional teaching that are indispensable. Thoroughly preparing lectures, beginning class strictly on time, clearly defining student responsibilities, and being prompt to office hours are included. Quickly returning graded homework, carefully typing and proofreading syllabi and exams, creating course web pages, and ending lectures on time also should be given high priority.

I was very fortunate to take a graduate class in topology from a professor well-known in the field. He explained a theorem's rather mysterious hypotheses by noting who had produced a difficult counterexample and when. On another occasion he taught not only the proof of a theorem but historical motivation behind the proof's method. Extensive knowledge of the subject increases student respect and encourages students to explore beyond topics covered in the textbook.

Sarah M. Brown

96 W 1940 N #115

Provo, UT 84604

(801) 371-2185 (Home)

(801) 422-7854 (Office)

sarah@math.byu.edu

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY (CONT)

Perhaps the most important aspect of teaching is the student-teacher relationship. While a poor relationship results in uncooperative, frustrated, and uncommunicative students, a strong relationship means students feel more comfortable participating in class and attending office hours. By knowing the students well, a teacher can better ascertain their interests, learning styles, and comprehension levels and adapt the lectures accordingly. Building good relationships may involve learning names, arriving early to class to chat, taking extra time during office hours, encouraging class discussion, and never, ever demeaning a student. My freshman calculus instructor still stopped to greet me by name when I was a senior. Because we had a good relationship, I felt comfortable asking him for advice about graduate school.

Improving one's teaching is a lifelong process, but by focusing on enthusiasm, high expectations, professionalism, thorough subject knowledge, and good student-teacher relationships, teachers and students will experience success in the classroom.