

## Rentz Teaching Philosophy

Education is the lynchpin of a prosperous society, and teachers carry the immense responsibility of ensuring that their students can survive and thrive in a world that grows more complex with each passing day. To make sure that their instruction is successful, a teacher should try to make their courses as accessible as possible. This allows for questions to be quickly researched and answered and helps to keep students from falling irrecoverably behind the rest of the class. As a key part of this process, teachers themselves should be as accessible as their schedule allows.

I believe that teaching works best when it allows both the instructor and the student to learn. To accomplish this, I have incorporated optional workshop days into my course schedule on Fridays. This allows those who need help to have the option of working in the classroom with their peers and with the instructor. This way, the student has the chance to speak their mind on problems they are facing, or to suggest potential solutions for the problems of others. The wide range of questions that students may find themselves working with allows the breadth and depth of the instructor's knowledge of the topic to be regularly tested and expanded, reinforcing the instructor's ability to assist students in the future.

I focus on discussion-based learning because it plays into the social and experiential goals that college students possess, and thus it can generate the motivation that Michigan State professor Carole Ames argues is so crucial to a successful learning environment in her 1990 paper.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, building such experiences into the course results in a class that finds its motivation to succeed in the positive social atmosphere that a discussion-oriented classroom can create. Students may retain much more information from discussion-oriented courses as opposed to lecture-oriented courses because discussions encourage students to be active participants in the course, with the teacher acting as both a moderator and a participant to make sure that the discussions lead to an overarching lesson. In courses where the teacher acts solely as a lecturer, bestowing a constant flow of information onto students, they may not feel as much of a connection to the material, and may feel as if they are barred from contributing to the learning process. As such, embodying the idea of learning as a two-way arrangement and prioritizing discussion over lecture is what I believe a good teacher should do to make the learning process as effective as possible for as many students as possible.

To be a good teacher, one must understand that learning is a journey, and that their goal as an instructor is to act as a guide. Along the learning process, an instructor should foster in their students an ability and a will to retain the knowledge provided to them long after the course has ended. Letting students have an active role in class and giving them opportunities to learn the material in a multitude of ways makes this<sup>1</sup> outcome much more achievable.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ames, Carole A. (1990). Motivation: What teachers need to know. *Teachers College Record*, 91(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146819009100306>