

TEACHING PORTFOLIO

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Teaching Philosophy

My philosophy of teaching revolves around the conviction that the task of education in general and teachers in particular is to encourage and enable students to escape self-tutelage and be able to critique themselves and society in a healthy way. I subscribe to Immanuel Kant's definition: "Tutelage is our inability to make use of our understanding without direction from another. And this tutelage is self-tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage without direction from another." Kant went on to admonish us to "Know yourselves! To have courage to use our own reason!"

This philosophy informs my observation that by the time students reach the university curriculum they have created a form of self-tutelage by believing that they must not appear to others as if they are "learning" anything. Which is another way of saying they cannot appear ignorant or stupid. It is like the feeling one gets when in a large city for the first time. One cannot, by any means, stare at the tall buildings, else the natives will know right away that you are a tourist, a stupid tourist, of course. The reluctance to appear ignorant, or touristy if you will, is the most glaring obstacle to an otherwise excellent educational opportunity. The ultimate consequence is that students want a system that allows them to "succeed" without exposing their shortcomings (particular with writing requirements), on the heels of which often follows a teaching strategy calculated to teach

without offense: Students are afraid to confess ignorance, teachers are afraid to expose ignorance—even in the name of eradicating ignorance.

My main teaching goal is to disabuse students of the notion that they should somehow know everything, and that learning must be a embarrassing experience. Students can and must experience the fact that confessing ignorance is the first step in gaining knowledge. If college is a new experience, it by definition must be strange, even unknown to a degree. Indeed, an educational experience—something experienced anew or for the first time—must by definition be somewhat uncomfortable. If it is not, then it is a redundancy, a waste of time. However, it does not have to be a distasteful occasion.

I firmly believe that most students are full of ideas and opinions that are suppressed—many for years—out of a simple fear of being wrong. The student's fear of inadequacy, coupled with the corollary impression that others do not feel likewise, becomes the single most debilitating aspect of a student's university career. The teaching methods and strategies I have developed and employ are calculated to counter this pervasive diffidence. In order to learn, students must get past the anxiety of becoming vulnerable to the learning experience. My primary concern as a teacher is to coax, nudge, and support students in this effort. There are two principal ways in which I attempt to achieve this strategy: writing and active learning, discussed in the section on Teaching Methods.

Teaching Responsibilities

I teach, along with all members of the political science faculty, a survey course in American government which is required of all university students in Georgia. I also teach public law courses, such as U.S. Constitutional Law, to political science majors who are in large measure planning to attend law school. I also teach public law courses to students with a major in Legal Assistant studies who are planning legal careers with law firms or governmental agencies upon graduation. I teach public law courses in the graduate MPA program and a college level American government course via satellite to selected high school students who will receive college credit. A complete list of courses taught during the past three years is found in Appendix A.

Recently I directed six students in directed study courses (POS 485) and two internships (POS 486). Directed study and internship activities are voluntarily assumed by faculty members in addition to a regular teaching load.

I developed a new course (POS 328) in trial advocacy. This course grew out of the mock trial program developed during the past year which has become and will continue to serve as an adjunct to the course in trial advocacy. (See Appendix A for a copy of the New Course Proposal and syllabus.)

I was selected to teach in a pilot in long distance learning during fall term 1994. The Georgia Board of Regents began offering on a trial basis American government to qualified high school students as part of the post secondary

option that makes college courses available to students who have not only qualified for college work while still in secondary school, but who could travel to and from the university campus during regular hours. The course I am teaching utilizes both telephonic and satellite technology to take the courses directly to the high schools in Georgia.

Student Advising

Student advising is considered very important at VSU. I currently have approximately fifteen formal advisees who are either political science/pre-law or legal assistant majors. I receive many of the inquiries from prospective students about the various public law programs at VSU. Moreover, my legal experience as a practicing trial lawyer for over two decades has attracted many students from all over the university for advice and consultation on law and law-related careers.

Teaching Methods

My teaching method is composed of four major components: writing exercises; active learning exercises; reader-response approach to analysis; and one-on-one sessions.

I emphasize the value of writing by having the students write in nontraditional ways. For example, I stress the personal involvement in writing; instead of having students simply essay about what the author "actually" said or meant or what some commentator thinks, I have students answer questions typical of the following: 1) What did *you* expect that the author had to say about anything? 2) Were *your* anticipations fulfilled? 3) If so how? 4) If not, what would you suggest the author say? An example instruction guide that I use to assist students in writing an essay on Madison's *Federalist Number Ten* can be found in Appendix D.

The hermeneutical technique of using various reader-response approaches to reading and understanding texts is another specific strategy I use to help students gain self-confidence as they learn substantive material. For instance, I insist that students read primary works rather than secondary works regardless of whether the author is James Madison or Plato, Richard Nixon or John Locke, and focus on their response rather than that of some commentator. When students realize that they do not have to relate to everything through a medium—parent, teacher, or other so-called experts—they not only gain an empowering self-confidence, they also become highly vested in their education.

The active learning activities involve simulation of the processes contained in the subject matter. This is most apparent in courses like judicial process and trial advocacy. But students also emulate other processes of government that implicate the Congress, the Presidency, and the public. For example, in the American government class, students in pairs or groups will emulate a congressional committee hearing or a presidential staff meeting.

A particular strategy that I employ to achieve my philosophical concern that students lack self-confidence is to conduct as many one-on-one sessions with students as possible. This relationship with students allows us to focus on their individual strengths and weaknesses. For instance, I do not simply assign several written exercises, grade them, and turn them back to the student. I work individually with students on one written exercise as they do multiple revisions to make points that build on each other at different levels. An example of this which consists of a progressive work by a legal assistant student—in this case successive drafts of a legal memorandum—in POS 316 is found in Appendix B.

Course Syllabi and Materials

Appendix C contains course syllabi and course descriptions for each course I currently teach or have taught during the period covered by this portfolio. My syllabi seek to explain to students not only what is objectively expected for completion of the course, but my teaching philosophy and strategies for accomplishing goals for the term as well. In constructing my syllabi I have consulted with colleagues at VSU and elsewhere. I have also used model suggestions contained in the pattern syllabi for political science courses published by the American Political Science Association.

Appendix D contains a letter to my students entitled the *How, Why, and What of Writing*. This piece seeks to help students understand the personal aspect of writing and how it is essential to internalizing the objective world in such a way that the students become *of* the world as well as *in* the world. This exercise implements my teaching philosophy by helping students overcome the self-consciousness that invariably attends “putting oneself on the line.” In other words, realizing that new experiences—especially writing about them—necessarily causes discomfort, students become comfortable with feelings of discomfort, thus receiving much more benefits from each new experience.

Student Evaluations

During the academic years at Union College in Barbourville, Kentucky, I consistently received student evaluation objective scores above the average for the Social Science Division. During my first year at VSU, I was also well-received by the students. For the Fall Quarter, I received the highest student ratings for the undergraduate survey course and for the upper-level courses offered political science majors. The scores received for fall and winter terms, which show that I have continued to receive student evaluations well above average, are summarized as follows:

Term	Course	Rating	Dept. Avg.
Fall	POS 200-B American Government	4.75 ¹	2
	POS 200-I American Government	4.36	
	POS 315 US Constitutional Law	4.80 ³	
Winter	POS 200-G American Government	4.68	4.29
	POS 200-I American Government	4.78	4.29
	POS 316 US Constitutional law	4.69	
Spring	POS 200-F American Government	4.81	3.97
	POS 200-H American Government	4.66	3.96
	POS 322 Judicial Process	4.80	n/a
Summer	POS 776 Labor Law	4.72	n/a
	POS 485 Sem: Law & Literature– Trial Advocacy	5.00	n/a

Responses are: 5 = highest score, 1 = lowest score. Copies of the survey questionnaires follow the survey data for each term in Appendix E.

¹Highest in the department for survey courses.

²Department data not available for this period.

³Highest in the department for an upper-level course.

A summary of the subjective comments made by students as part of the evaluation process are set forth in Appendix E along with copies of the complete student evaluation forms. Some student comments that reveal success in implementing my teaching philosophy are:

- Dr. Willis is very profound when it comes to explaining the material of this course. He does an excellent job giving the reasons why behind the facts stated in the textbook. He takes teaching this course a step further by being very communicative with the class and going into detail. He also shows how the material studied in this class relates to the society and world we live in today.
- Dr. Willis was very helpful during the quarter and was always available if we needed him.
- Most enthusiastic professor I've had at VSU. He really tried to relate the material to real situations. Encouraged critical thinking based on sound logical arguments. Excellent instructor.
- Dr. Willis genuinely cares if a student is learning in his class. I have had only one other instructor during my college career that I feel I learned as much from.

- Excellent, but a little scattered. I benefited a lot because constitutional law is very important in my profession. Dr. Willis provided a foundation-building format and built strongly on it. I feel prepared to handle complex issues.
- Dr. Willis is a patient, caring, and knowledgeable instructor. It was a joy to be in this class.
- Dr. Willis is a very good instructor. Dr. Willis took up a lot of time with us as a class and individually.
- I feel that Dr. Willis is an excellent instructor. He shows and is concerned about the students.
- Very enthusiastic. Encourages participation and is extremely helpful outside of class.

Administrative and Peer Review

My teaching performance has been reviewed by my immediate administrative supervisors for the past three years. Most recently, my department head stated that

Dr. Willis made an outstanding beginning to his academic career at VSU. He was extremely well-received by the undergraduate students, and this is reflected in the fact that his student ratings for one section of POS 200 and his ratings for the upper-division course were the highest in the department for those categories. He is intelligent, dynamic, and energetic in the classroom. Students are constantly in the office seeking his advice, and he freely gives of his time.

An earlier comment by one of my supervisors states: "Clyde has made a very positive contribution to social sciences and Union College in his first year. I don't think we could have found a better person for the position." Appendix M contains copies of these reviews and a letter from a colleague that states: "Clyde's Intro to Criminal Justice stirred one student to change to that major, and the honesty of the issues discussed in Administrative Security was appreciated. Also Clyde's integrity and abilities in the classroom were mentioned more than once."

Regarding my performance in teaching via the long distance network, the Director of the Long Distance Program at VSU made the following comment to the university president regarding my performance: "Site facilitators at all of the distance sites have told me how much the students love Dr. Clyde Willis. He is doing an excellent job teaching the post secondary option political science class. From what I have seen and heard, you could not have picked a better professor for this class." (See Appendix A for copy of this memorandum.)

Related Activities: For Students

I advise VSU's local chapter of Phi Alpha Delta, the international pre-professional legal society. In that role I have assisted the program in a variety of ways: discussion of topics and issues of interest to the members, advising, scheduling, recruitment, etc. A major undertaking associated with Phi Alpha Delta was the organization of a mock trial team at VSU. In the mock trial program students learn how to analyze and organize a random set of facts into a presentable, persuasive argument. They also learn trial and advocacy procedure as they perfect communication and analytical skills presenting cases in simulated courtroom trials.

The mock trial program is part of the national program sponsored by the American Mock Trial Association headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa, that conducts an annual national competition. The team competed in the Annual Capital Classic Mock Trial Tournament at the University of Maryland at College Park, and the American Mock Trial Association Regional Tournament in Atlanta, where it received a bid to compete in the national AMTA tournament in Milwaukee. The team, which received an Outstanding First Team Award at Milwaukee, was proud to have three of its members receive individual honors at all three competitions. I organized and directed a Southeastern American Mock Trial Invitational Tournament. The mock trial program is extracurricular for both students and teacher. See Appendix F for news articles and memoranda relating to this activity.

I am the faculty advisor to the *Spectator*, the university's student-newspaper. In that role I advise the faculty and student staff on legal advice involving a wide range of activities from advertising contracts to freedom of the press issues.

I was the moderator for the spring Student Government Association elections held in Powel Hall. I advise the Student Government Association and the SGA Senate. The SGA conducted presidential impeachment proceedings and it has considered various issues impacting the right of expression and association. See Appendix F for news articles relating to this activity.

I conducted a two-day, twelve-hour Seminar-Workshop on Computer Assisted Legal Research (CALR) for students who had not been able to cover the topic in the Legal Research course (POS/LA 325). Some faculty also attended the seminar-workshop. Evaluations rated the instructor 3.75 on a scale of 4 = Excellent, 3 = Good, 2 = Fair, 1 = Poor for knowledge, preparation, communication, and overall effectiveness. See Appendix F for a letter of thanks from the Continuing Education Center and copies of participant evaluations.

I proposed and assisted the successful nomination of a student in my constitutional law class for the Annie Powe-Hopper Award. This is the university's most distinguished annual award. The winner must exemplify the tradition of VSU and those traits of character, dignity, and scholarship associated with the

best of university traditions. See Appendix F for news articles and my nominating petition relating to this activity.

While at Union College, I served as a judge at intercollegiate academic tournaments. Appendix F contains a letter of thanks for participating in that activity.

Many of the students who attend my classes participate in the trial advocacy program and seek advice from me plan to attend graduate and professional schools. Consequently, I am frequently called upon to write letters of recommendation. Appendix F contains sample letters of recommendation that I have recently completed on behalf of these students.

Related Activities: For the University

I have served on a variety of committees for both the political science department and the university as a whole. I serve on 1) the department's committee which has commenced to make the assessment of its undergraduate program in Legal Studies. I wrote the "Statement of Purpose" and "Outcomes" as a member of that committee; 2) the department's promotion and tenure committee; 3) the faculty search committee; 4) the department's committee to review and revise the questionnaire form used by students in the Survey of Student Opinion of Instructor & Course; 5) the department's committee to study the role of adjuncts and make policy recommendations to the chair; 6) the university's committee on the faculty handbook; 7) advisor to the faculty grievance committee; 8) distance learning policy subcommittee on training; and 9) the Pew Higher Education Roundtable, as one of three representatives from the College of Arts and Sciences at VSU. (See Appendix G for a sample of my participation in committee affairs.) At Union College during the 1992-93 academic year I served on the self-study committee that prepared the report (with documentation) for a SACS accreditation review, and also the committee on committees as chair.

I participated as a panelist in a public forum on "Politics, Privacy, and the Press," an explanation of media ethics through film and panel discussion at VSU. The event was supported in part by the Georgia Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

I conducted a half-day seminar-workshop for the VSU Odum Library staff on how to use Georgia Law on Disk, a CD-ROM electronic legal research service produced by the Michie Company.

I presented four student-faculty lectures at Union College in Barbourville, Kentucky. The lectures were: "Limited Government: Who is Limited and Who is Not," part of the Union College Lecture Series and later published under the title of "The Paradox of Limited Government: A Topsy-Turvy World"; "The Hermeneutics of Literary Criticism"; "Battleships, Pepsi-Cola and College Dictionaries: A Notion of Democratic-Capitalism"; and "Mr. Civil Rights: An

Essay/Lecture In Tribute to Justice Thurgood Marshall." Copies or summaries of these lectures are included in Appendix G.

Related Activities: For the Community

I presented a program to the Valdosta Bar Association on the various aspects of the Legal Assistant Studies program. The presentation covered three major aspects: the B.A. degree, the opportunity for selective education by law office personnel, and the opportunity for continuing legal education courses and programs offered jointly by the Political Science faculty and VSU's Continuing Education Department.

Service to the community-at-large is a major commitment of the University and one I take very seriously as well. I presented a four-evening workshop-seminar on electronic legal research to the South Georgia Association of Legal Assistants; I presented a similar two-day workshop to attorneys from bar associations in South Georgia (see Appendix H); and also I directed a student-led mock trial before the South Georgia Association of Radiologists that dealt with medical malpractice. I also presented two half-day seminars at the South Georgia Medical Center entitled "The Medical Community Meets the Legal Community." Each of these programs has been approved for continuing education credits by the various agencies respectively in charge of legal assistants, lawyers, and radiologists.

Professional Improvement Activities

I was awarded a faculty development grant by the VSU Center for Faculty Development and Institutional Improvement. This grant allowed me to attend and participate in the faculty/coach workshops and seminars while attending the National Intercollegiate Mock Trial Tournament at the University of Milwaukee. These workshops and seminars covered various aspects of mock trial advocacy competition as well as administrative aspects of the American Mock Trial Association. Included in the activities were: discussion of appropriate course materials, types and manner of supporting lab experience, and consideration of problems encountered by existing programs. A copy of my grant proposal and final report along with a letter of congratulations—when I locate its whereabouts—from the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts are contained in Appendix I.

I attended three course-related legal seminars. One seminar was on ethics in the legal community, another on criminal law, and one on the legal rights of workers in the modern workplace. Most of my courses in public law, particularly the courses in trial advocacy and judicial procedure, have an ethical component which was facilitated by the ethics seminar. The seminar on workers' rights was very germane to my graduate course in labor law. Programs from these seminars can be found in Appendix I to the extent I have been able to locate them among my papers.

I do not draw my classroom lectures from textbooks alone. I engage in independent, original research for the specific purpose of delivering at least a few lectures each term that are not contained in the typical textbook treatment. Many of my lectures are taken directly from my research effort. During the past three years, I have engaged in different forms of research, writing, and professional presentation that were directly related to and helpful in my course preparation. Examples of these, which can be found in Appendix H.

- I participated in a conference that related to my American government class. This was a constitutional conference in Atlanta for South Africans sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency. The purpose of this conference was to present to a delegation of twelve South Africans from wide-ranging political and economic positions various aspects of the American constitutional system. I presented a paper on the constitutional evolution of the American presidency. This 3,200-word paper was entitled "The Genesis and Evolution of the U.S. Presidency: A Constitutional Perspective." This paper reviewed certain aspects of the process by which a very undemocratic government evolved into a very democratic government while emphasizing the continuing limitations on democratic processes with the conclusion that it is most critical to focus on where political society is going rather than where it has been, and relying on short constitutional documents that are written in very broad and general terms is the best way to get there.
- Also related to my American government course is a 4,100-word essay entitled "The Paradox of Limited Government: A Topsy-Turvy World" which was accepted for publication in the edition of *American Review*, a publication of the Institute for American Studies at Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg, South Africa. The essay argued that the general use of the term *limited* as applied to government suggests that the concept has today become the opposite of what it originally meant. If democracy is a self-regulating (i.e., self-governing) society in which all members participate and disagreements are settled by the democratic process (i.e., majority vote), limiting either the scope or authority of government obviously defeats the very rationale of democratic government.
- "Judicial Interpretation: Distinctions Without Differences" is an essay I wrote for inclusion in *Perspectives in Politics: From Aristotle to Present*, Peterson, Argile, and Allen, eds. (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1994). This essay has generated several lectures and written assignments for my American constitutional law course. The essay reviews the attempt to employ an objective method of textual interpretation employed by judges in deciding cases. The review reveals an attempt by some to construct a meaning

of law that is external to the judge's subjectivity. The article uses the interpretative approaches offered by former Associate Justice William Brennan and former United States Attorney General Edwin Meese to make the argument that while each approach can be distinguished, there is no essential difference as far as avoiding judicial subjectivity is concerned. In other words, each interpretative method ultimately rests in part on judicial subjectivity, just different versions.

The article admonishes the reader to make subjectivity a manifest part of the interpretative process that will lead to a responsible accounting of its effect rather than a simple and hazardous denial of its existence. Since, as Justice Blackmun states, the verbal expressions are just the point of beginning, we must, following Plato as he stated in *Rebetorica*, argue that the juror's oath "I will give my verdict according to my honest opinion," means that one will not simply follow the letter of the law. This means that we must pursue the analysis of judicial subjectivity.

The article, as well as the lectures it has generated, provokes students to see and understand a given set of facts from radically different perspectives. This leads to an analysis of the considerations and processes appropriate to presenting a constitutional or legal argument.

Goals

- During the next academic cycle, I want to improve and expand my syllabi and course materials to better reflect and strategically articulate my educational philosophy.
- By the end of the next academic year I want to have received some formal training in teaching via satellite technology and write an article that addresses a broad policy issue in that teaching technology. One possible issue concerns the extent we may be sacrificing authentic human communities at a time when they are most needed.
- I want to complete my research and writing on an article that critiques James Madison's *Federalist Number Ten*. This work is directly related to my American government class inasmuch as I routinely assign students the task of writing an interpretative essay on Madison's work.
- I want to introduce a course in legal philosophy into the public law curriculum.
- I want to complete work on my manuscript, *Phenomenology of Judicial Decision-making*, and use the work as a foundation in teaching a seminar on Theories of Legal-Literary Criticism.

Appendices

- Appendix A: List of Courses Taught
- Appendix B: Samples of Student Work
- Appendix C: Course Syllabi and Materials
- Appendix D: Student Learning Aids
- Appendix E: Student, Admin., & Peer Evaluations
- Appendix F: Student-Related Activities
- Appendix G: University-Related Activities
- Appendix H: Community-Related Activities
- Appendix I: Professional Improvement Activities

