

Teaching Philosophy Statement

I have been tutoring and volunteering with students since I was a teenager, and have been especially excited to work with STEM outreach programs like Girls Who Code, and other opportunities aimed at supporting students from groups underrepresented in computing. This interest in teaching derives in part from my father, who is a professor of mathematics. Hearing from his students about the impact he has had on their learning experiences and lives beyond the classroom has always been inspiring for me. As I have developed my own teaching style, I have tried to draw from his example and those of the other teachers that have had a positive impact on my life, as well as incorporate insights from others' experiences and my research on educational tools. In particular, I seek not only to impart content knowledge, but also to be a mentor for my students and instill in them a sense of confidence and belonging, and an understanding of the importance of continual improvement. I hope to accomplish these aims both through the design of my courses and through modeling this behavior myself.

One of my biggest goals is to create a psychologically safe environment for my students. That is, I want them to feel empowered to take risks and to be vulnerable, and especially to ask questions, which is something that I often struggle with as a student. One of my most discouraging educational experiences was my undergraduate software engineering course, in which I was the only woman and was especially worried about appearing stupid or weak by asking a question. Early in the course, I struggled to learn how to use GitHub for version control and to get started with web programming, and was hesitant to ask even my own teammates for help. I later realized that most other students in the course were struggling just as much as I was, but like me, had been too afraid to admit it. This discovery reassured me that I really did belong in the course, and made me feel confident enough to ask what I needed to in order to succeed.

Because of this experience, I try to make clear in my classes that it is always alright to ask questions, and I often pause to explicitly ask students what questions they have. I also try to

convey that even as the instructor, I am still learning. For example, I acknowledge when students ask questions that go beyond the scope of the course or my experience, and provide them with resources they can use to learn more about these topics. Keeping up with the constantly expanding knowledge base in computer science requires continual learning, and my students and I both need to be willing and able to ask questions and pursue new topics as they arise.

In addition to expanding my content knowledge, I am also always seeking opportunities to improve my teaching. Throughout my undergraduate and graduate coursework, I prioritized classes related to educational technology and teaching techniques. When necessary, I have also pursued additional learning opportunities to supplement gaps in my knowledge. For example, I completed an online course on the basics of accessibility, in the hopes of making my course materials and other content more useful to a variety of students. Taking courses alone is not sufficient, however. I also believe it is important to improve based on feedback. To this end, I have taken advantage of the teaching observations provided by UIUC's Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning. I also have periodic discussions with my mentees to adjust our advising relationships to better serve them.

Above all, I want to treat my students with respect and in recognition of the fact that they are people with their own lives outside of my class. I will make clear what my expectations are upfront by creating rubrics and providing them to students when they begin an assignment. I will offer flexible deadlines to students who have extenuating circumstances, and when work is submitted to me, I will grade and return it in a timely manner so that students are able to make use of my feedback while it is still relevant. My most positive experiences as a student have been with teachers who allow us to take risks and make mistakes, who are warm and celebrate our successes with us, and who foster open communication about whatever issues we may be having. As I begin my own teaching career, I hope to emulate these instructors and serve as a mentor and example for my students, just as these teachers were for me.