Teaching Philosophy for Mark Grimes

I am passionate about technology. For almost twenty years, learning, teaching, and researching technology has been a significant part of my life. I have worked in IT since 1996, and as a practitioner of technology I constantly worked to investigate new and better ways to use technology to improve the businesses I worked with. As an employee, I felt it was important to share knowledge in order to provide wider benefit to my company and coworkers. As an educator, it is my goal to bring this "real world" experience into the classroom to train the next generation of business and IT leaders.

I believe the most effective learning occurs when students enjoy being in the classroom. Enjoyment is facilitated when:

- The content and presentation is engaging, relevant, and fun

- Expectations are clearly stated through learning objectives, rubrics, and structured guidance

- The instructor is a partner in learning, not an imposing force

Effective learning is contingent upon there being a reason to learn the material. To be receptive to receiving new information and converting it into knowledge, students must understand why the material is important and they must believe the information is valid. To facilitate this process, I begin every semester with a needs assessment in which students report their goals and concerns about the class, as well as their familiarity with a selection of current and emerging technologies. Based on their feedback, I structure the class to meet their individual needs and desires. Throughout the semester I work to help them understand how the material relates to their personal goals.

In addition to the material being relevant to the individual, it is important that students understand how the material is relevant in the "real world". I have over a decade of business experience with jobs ranging from end user technical support to enterprise IT architecture. This experience enables me to bring real and interesting examples into the classroom and demonstrate how classroom topics are used for real business solutions. Rather than definitions from a textbook, I present the material as concepts from the real world—an approach students appreciate.

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I am a partner in learning with my students. While I bring considerable experience to the table, I value the fact that my students also bring valuable life experience into the classroom. In class discussions significantly benefit the learning experience by helping students talk through the material and understand the concepts from different perspectives. My students often have different experiences with emerging technologies than I do, and those insights provide value to me as a teacher and a researcher.

I also understand that individuals learn in different ways. I strive to present materials using a variety of formats to appeal to different learning styles. In addition to lectures and stories, I make extensive use of videos, discussion, think-pair-share activities, interactive demonstrations, and homework and projects that require students to synthesize and apply classroom content. Homework is never "busy work" - it is always designed to enhance understanding and appreciation of the material.

It is my goal that my students leave class with something they did not have before: a new skill that helps them excel in other areas, a newfound interest in technology, or just a renewed curiosity in the world. If that happens, something more important than grades on a transcript has occurred. While I believe knowledge, not grades, should be the goal of education, I also believe continual and predictable assessment is a key component of learning. To this end, each course module begins with clearly stated learning objectives so learners are able to easily identify key points in the material. Comprehension of learning objectives is measured using both formal assessments such as exams, projects, and homework and informal assessments such as classroom discussions and ungraded in-class mini-quizzes. Clear expectations and rubrics give students confidence in formal assessments, while a conversational, low pressure environment that encourages students to build and explore ideas facilitates informal assessment.

It is my life goal to improve the world through effective and innovative applications of technology. I believe the two most effective ways I can do this are through my teaching and research. I have a true interest in the success of my students – I want them to share my passion for technology, and understand that no matter what their field, technology matters. I understand that not all of my students will fall in love with technology. Regardless, I do hope they learn to appreciate the benefits of technology, and more importantly, I hope they will fall in love with learning as I have. Regardless of their individual areas of interest, becoming lifelong learners will help them to be more engaged, interesting, and productive members of society. I consider it an honor to be a part of their growth as a learner.

What do students say about Mark's teaching?

"I really enjoy the atmosphere in the class. Mr. Grimes is a positive guy, and he really brings the class to life."

"He's passionate about teaching the material, which makes the class more fun to attend."

"Engaging, gets people involved"

"I didn't feel like I was just doing busy [work], I feel like I was learning"

"Easy to pay attention. I can tell you really want us to learn and grades are almost a secondary tool."

"Often times in class I have no idea as to how the topic relates to me now or later in life but this course has done an amazing job of doing that."

"I enjoy that we go over the topics from previous classes each day. This helps keep the information fresh for the exam. I wish more professors did this."

"[I like] the consistency between what is taught and what we are tested on. The teacher's upbeat and engaging attitude. The videos presented in class and how what we are learning actually relates to the real world."

"Each class participant is free to express opinions and ask questions about current technologies and IS possible developments and future uses."

"I believe that you are an excellent teacher and I am grateful that you seem to care about how this course actually relates to the outside world. The videos and examples truly facilitate the grasp of the concepts and help with retention. Thank you!!"