Teaching Statement

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Based primarily on my own experiences as a teaching assistant and a student, as well as by observing other teachers, I have found that it is fairly easy to be a mediocre teacher, but very hard to be a good one. Based on this, my core teaching philosophy is made up of three major components.

First, it is absolutely essential that good teachers be clear and effective communicators. Teachers must be able to speak slowly and concisely, and should be able to present material in a variety of different ways. In addition, teachers should be able to make use of different types of media when appropriate, including blackboards, presentations, video, and computer labs. Good examples are critical during class, and relevant but challenging homework exercises can help students feel more confident taking their understanding to the next level. By the same token, good communicators must also be able to listen to their students. This includes being attentive to students' reactions during lectures, and fostering an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions.

Second, good teachers must have clear expectations of the class, and these should be set into motion from the first day onwards; these may include class policies on tardiness, late homework, grading rubrics, and extra credit work. In addition to this, written materials, like a class syllabus and course webpage, can be very useful in conveying information about the pace and level of the class. Regardless of the expectations put in place by a teacher, she should remain consistent throughout the semester; this will help students on a day-to-day basis as they prepare for the class. Likewise, the teacher should herself consistently meet the expectations of the students, whether in arriving on time, returning graded homeworks and tests promptly, holding office hours, or responding promptly to emails.

Finally, and most importantly, a good teacher must be engaged in both the course material and the students themselves – students are often much more willing to be interested in course material when teachers are interested in them. Teachers should make every effort to learn and use students' names, and to be responsive to any difficulties they are having with the course material. Asking “Do you understand?” is usually not enough; teachers must interact on a deeper level with students if they really want to pass on the
course material. And of course, the best teachers are usually those who are excited about the subject matter of the course. Students pick up on enthusiasm, and as such, I believe that it is one of the most important tools of a good teacher.

I am interested in teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. At the undergraduate level, I am particularly interested in teaching an elementary statistical methods course or introduction to probability course, whether to science or non-science majors. At the graduate level, I would like to teach courses in applied linear regression, experimental design, and multivariate analysis. Specialty courses related to my research include computational biology, Bayesian analysis, and network analysis.