

MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I began my teaching career as a Teaching Assistant when I was still a student at the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina and, except for a year long-break during which I worked for a mineral exploration company in Paraguay, all my working career has been dedicated to instruction at the college level.

Geology was not on my mind when I started college, but I soon discovered that it is such a far-ranging field that it provided ample latitude to satisfy my curiosity. Thus, the focus of my interests changed as time went by. Paleontology and stratigraphy, petroleum geology, the petrology and geochemistry of uranium in granites, and lately gemstones are all fields I have eagerly explored.

This wide-ranging background has served me and my students well in my teaching career at UGA, both because of the flexibility that it affords in the courses that I can offer and also because I feel very comfortable teaching them. The brunt of my teaching load currently rests on GEOL 1121 - Earth Processes and Environments (Physical Geology for non-geology majors with a strong environmental emphasis) and GEOL 1122 - History of Global Change (Historical Geology for non-geology majors). I also offer, once a year, a rigorous lab-based course on Gemology (GEOL 3090 - Gems and Gem Materials) in which students (mostly non-geology majors) learn to identify gemstones using the same techniques and equipment used by professional gemologists. I have also taught GEOL 3200 - Rocks and Minerals (petrography for non-geology majors), GEOL 2120 - Introduction to Environmental Geology and GEOL 3130 - Geology of the National Parks.

Most of the students enrolled in my 1000 level courses take them in order to satisfy general education science requirements and not necessarily because they are particularly interested in Geology. My goals when teaching these courses are three-pronged. First, I want my students to learn how to analyze geologic information and feel that they have acquired a skill that will be useful to them when making decisions related to the physical environment that may directly affect their lives. Second, I work to develop in them an appreciation for the environment, not only because of its aesthetic beauty and its value as our only source of resources, but also so that they can comprehend how the details of our geological environment came to be. Finally, I try to convey a cosmopolitan view of geology by introducing examples from around the world, collected from my own experiences growing up in South America, as well as from my extensive travels throughout North America and Spain. I feel that, in a world that is inevitably moving toward greater globalization, education must include more than basic understanding of other cultures. It is in the benefit of students to be exposed to different (and often contradictory) viewpoints and philosophies, so that they will be able to function efficiently should they end up working abroad.

The 3000 level courses tend to be easier to teach, because most students in them have chosen to take these classes as science electives. My formula here is to make the class strongly applied and "hands-on". Team work develops strong interaction among students and between them and me. They discuss their work as a way to clarify and fix concepts. This teaching strategy: introduction of new concepts followed by hands-on application and team work consistently results in the students acquiring knowledge at a

higher level and at a faster rate than with other methods. It also has the benefit of building up self-confidence in the students, a quality fundamental for creativity and productivity.

My position at UGA has also allowed me to expand education beyond the traditional classroom. In 1997 I developed a Distance Learning version of GEOL 1121 (Earth Processes and Environments), followed closely by a Distance Learning version of its related lab course (GEOL 1121L), one of the few science lab courses by mail offered for academic credit at that time. I have also created the Distance Learning version of GEOL 1122 (History of Global Change) in 2001, and the second edition of the GEOL 1121 course in 2003, this time incorporating an online text, electronic lesson submission or the capability to take the course using the Web. I have been recruited to teach GEOL 1011K, Introduction to Geosciences I through eCore, the Board of Regents Core Curriculum online. This fast paced, rigorous course is in the process of being revised, and I have been working as part of the revision team since Fall 2006.

Besides teaching, my efforts during this last two years have focused on the development and execution of a Geology Study Abroad Program in Argentina, titled "UGA Geology Study Abroad: Field experience in Argentina". The program goals are to provide students with a highly applied quality experience in general education and elective undergraduate courses in geology while immersed in Argentine culture. The overarching theme of this Study Abroad experience is the human impact on the physical environment caused by the development and use of Earth resources. This theme is set in the context of the geological history of southern South America. We were able to put the ideas into practice this last summer and completed a 4000 mile trek that took us from the Pampas Plains to the Andes Mountain and then launched us to in search of volcanoes (and adventure) in the heart of the Puna Plateau.

Teaching and learning have been a passion throughout my life. I intend to keep doing it with the same enthusiasm I had the first day I set foot in a classroom as a Teaching Assistant. Having students tell me that they look at the Earth differently after my class continues to be very rewarding for me and totally worth all my efforts.