

Teaching philosophy

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I believe that the most important thing that I can do to help the students in my class is to be available. I frequently offer to meet students on Skype in order to discuss problems they may be having in class. This is an option that has worked very well. Most often, students cannot come to office hours during the week, the time when it is normal for instructors and TAs to have office hours. With Skype, it is possible to talk on the weekend and is more convenient for students, since they can talk to me from home. In the end, this makes it more likely that students will seek help when they need it. Also, if students are sick and cannot come to campus, this provides a way of helping them with their questions. I think that far too many students do not seek out help when they need it in class. I feel that making myself available on Skype makes it more likely that they will get the help they need.

I also try to give lots of feedback on writing assignments, especially since I think that improving writing skills should be one of our first priorities in the classroom. I was very frustrated as an undergrad when I received writing assignments that had check marks, underlining and question marks, without any explanation from the instructor. I try to give detailed written feedback -- even on the best papers -- so students will understand where they are strong and how to improve their arguments. I also am not afraid to give negative feedback when needed, and clearly explain to students what they could do to improve their papers.