

Statement of Teaching Philosophy Joseph F. Chandler

What I remember from my favorite classes as a student, and what I employ now as an instructor, are both rooted in basic psychological principles. I truly love what I teach, and I use my love for psychology to guide my teaching. I tell stories, employ multiple senses, cater to the social animal, focus on **how** to think rather than **what** to think, and remember to laugh.

Telling a good story

The way in which material is taken in is directly tied to the chances of remembering it. Rote memorization is not good enough. It is necessary to encode information elaborately, that is, with as much depth and detail as possible. There are three advantages here: 1) the most effective elaborate encoding is tied to what we already know about ourselves: if it happened to me, it must be important! 2) it allows us to tell stories rather than present facts; details, examples, and explanations are all cues for recall; the more cues there are the better the chance of recall, and 3) stories are just plain fun.. I do not lecture my students; I tell them a story. When studying elaborate encoding you can just provide a definition; alternately, you can define it, illustrate via examples and then ask for student examples. That is, have them tell stories, too. Story telling potentiates pedagogy.

Taste those facts!

Elaborate encoding can be seen from several angles; we have five senses – why not use as many as possible to paint a cue-rich picture? Stories come in many forms: music, movies, skits, group presentations, and spontaneous ideas. A vivid lecture is only one way to convey meaning. I want my students to see people with unusual brain disorders, to listen to song lyrics based in depression, to act out classic experiments from their book, and to read great psychological works. I have not yet worked out taste and smell, but I am trying.

We are social animals

Effective story telling happens in groups. It involves a giver and a receiver. This, along with the influence of social comparison theory (individuals work harder when in groups than alone), necessitates attendance and active participation in my classroom. Different story telling techniques accommodate different learning styles and different levels of participation. One student may love acting out a classic experiment while another may freeze in that position. One may sleep through a video while another wakes to watch it. It is this variety that allows me to cater to all of my students. The point is that each approach requires they **be there**.

How to think, not what to think

Now the issue is **what** they should remember. What if my approaches don't work and six months after the class a student recalls only 15% of what he or she learned? That is what the textbook is for. Students can always go look it up. I consider my role not to cram my students' heads with a set of disconnected facts; rather, **I strive to change the way they think**. Critical thinking skills are essential to success in science, but it does not end there. We must be intelligent consumers of information. College students, face novel, complicated decisions every day. For instance: how to buy a car. The answer is the scientific method! 1)

Set up a hypothesis (Car A is a better than Car B), 2) design the method for gathering data (use a combination of internet reviews, car magazines, and personal recommendations), 3) collect the data (compile the information gathered), 4) analyze the data and draw conclusions (Car A gets better reviews across the board, my dad had one for 15 years, and it costs less – I will purchase Car A), and 5) report your findings (I will let others know about the merits of Car A). I ask my students to apply this formula to everything I tell them. I encourage them to correct me, and warn that I will require evidence. Soon, I am rewarded with lovely answers to essay questions, well-balanced papers, and conversations in which I have to flex my own mind! This is the ultimate purpose in my classroom: to become better thinkers, better speakers, and better listeners.

Laughter is the best medicine... and teaching tool.

Laughter is a powerful tool in the classroom. It allays anxiety, often resolves conflict, and is an excellent elaborative cue for recall. Think about how well you remember a funny joke versus the periodic table of the elements and you'll see what I mean.

I teach from two undeniable angles: 1) as my job. A shoe salesperson sells shoes, and so is dedicated to finding the best shoe for each customer in order to make a sale. I teach, so I must be dedicated to finding the best approaches and combination of techniques to teach my students something valuable. And 2) as my passion. I would be telling anyone who would listen to me about this stuff anyway, so I might as well benefit some other people in the process.