<u>Teaching Philosophy</u>

In Plato's Meno, Socrates asks his interlocutor, Meno, whether virtue can be taught. While I am not sure if virtue can be taught, I am confident that virtue can be learned. And my role as a teacher is to provide my students knowledge, skills, and experiences to better enable my students – both inside and outside of the classroom – to grow in intellectual and moral virtue. During my PhD program, I took on extra pedagogical training opportunities and obtained a teaching certification. In order to accomplish the purpose of educating the whole person and forming students in virtue, my teaching is focused on three main dimensions: (1) Learning to live well; (2) Active learning (3) Accessibility for all students.

Learning to Live Well: Many students fail to see the practical import of academic philosophy. I approach my teaching with the end goal of helping my students learn to live well, and I believe that this aim has successfully guided my students in their learning, as a student's course evaluation comment illustrates: "I actively utilize the knowledge I gained from this class and I think it makes me a better person, US citizen, researcher, and ultimately, it will make me a much better nurse." This approach permeates the texts I choose for my courses, the classroom activities that I have students engage in, as well as the homework assigned. For instance, in my Bioethics course, students not only read and evaluate contemporary analytic arguments on the moral (im)permissibility of euthanasia, but they also examine what makes for a good death by considering the Medieval handbook of dying well, *Ars Moriendi*. In teaching this lesson, I have students consider the importance that should be given to a lifelong commitment to virtue as preparation for a good death, and if the relevant virtues for a good death in today's world have changed at all since the Medieval times. The lesson culminates with students writing their own contemporary *Ars Moriendi*, or an instruction manual for guiding a person today towards a good death

Active Learning: A good teacher isn't one who gives students information to passively absorb, but makes opportunities for students to understand ideas, point out problems, and create solutions. My approach to teaching is to get my students to teach each other and to uncover questions and answers for themselves. I employ in-class debates, where students are assigned a particular side of an issue and defend it against their classmates' objections. And instead of simply giving my students an argument to evaluate, I will first often have them 'map' it out – they are given the premises, sub-conclusions, and conclusion, and they must assemble the pieces in the right logical order before critically engaging with it. I believe this kind of active learning leads to enhanced comprehension by the students, but I also derive great benefit from it. As a former student noted in their course evaluation: "[Professor Waggoner] is truly interested to hear what her students have to say." I am indeed interested, and this is because I believe my students have much to teach me. This contributes to the mutual respect that my students and I have for each other and creates for a supportive learning environment.

Accessibility for all Students: Within a given classroom, students will likely vary widely in life experiences, cultural and religious background, upbringing, and academic readiness. I often designed my courses with a diverse group of students in mind, putting forth various options for assignments from which students can choose, depending on what will best suite their learning needs. I hold regular individual or small group tutoring sessions in which students who are falling behind can come in to go over course material. Various students often comment about how much they value opportunities for this additional help and accommodations in their course evaluations: "Thank you for being so accessible and willing to help;" "I appreciate her taking the time out of her day to accommodate me with a family situation. That spoke volumes;" "Maria was very easy to talk to and work with for any questions/problems/help I needed." One reason I find it particularly pressing to make my courses accessible is that failing to do so amounts to failing to provide my students with a basis of questions (and answers) that matter to their formation as a moral persons and members of society. I see teaching as not merely defining concepts and giving arguments, but also as importantly aiding my students' social and intellectual formation. This means that each student matters in an immeasurable way. My teaching aims to reflect that.