

ANDREW RICHMOND

Teaching Statement

In my teaching I focus on two main goals. First, I aim make my courses relevant to the widest range of students possible. Though I am always trying to reach the philosophy majors in the class, I know that philosophy is important and worthwhile for students from other disciplines, and my course design reflects an ongoing attempt to make course content, assessments, and learning objectives relevant to them. E.g., As a *Teaching Scholar* at Columbia I won a year's funding to develop and teach a course called *Philosophy and Artificial Intelligence*, which enrolled students from not just philosophy but also biology, computer science, business, and anthropology. In that course I used content from philosophy, computer science, psychology, fiction, business and management literature, and government policy. And to provide each student with a path through the course that was meaningful and fruitful for them, I had students propose and design (in collaboration with me) their own final projects. The students were required to justify their final projects by reference to their own learning goals, and to tie those learning goals explicitly to their careers and futures more broadly. This allowed me to promote meta-cognition and help students develop a range of learning skills (to do with goal-setting, independent research, and the like) that they do not have the chance to practice in most of their other courses. But most importantly, it provided significant individualization. The diverse course material and the range of final projects — I received everything from computer programs to documentary films to sculptures — gave students many different paths through the course and many different ways of making it meaningful and relevant to their own futures.

I developed that course, along with many of the ideas and commitments behind it, through seminars and workshops at Columbia's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and especially through a two week workshop I ran on Universal Design for Learning as a *Senior Lead Teaching Fellow*. As part of that fellowship I also honed my mentorship skills supervising a group of *Lead Teaching Fellows* as they ran pedagogy events, worked as liaisons for the CTL, and developed their own skills as teachers.

My second goal as a teacher is to promote diversity in philosophy. Some of the methods above apply here as well, e.g., individualization can help a more diverse range of students feel comfortable and confident with course material and assignments. But I also work with a number of organizations that aim to improve minority representation in philosophy (and academia more generally). I've served as a mentor with Columbia's *Minorities and Philosophy* chapter, supporting students from minoritized backgrounds through challenges at Columbia (sometimes a new and difficult environment for them). I've volunteered with *Corrupt the Youth*, helping to teach philosophy in Title I high schools, and with *Rethink*, a Columbia organization that holds philosophy discussions and develops study materials for people in marginalized communities, especially ones that are rarely included in philosophical discourse but might benefit greatly from it. We've worked with incarcerated people, victims of domestic violence, and various groups of "at risk" youth. With *Corrupt the Youth* and *Rethink* I've developed unconventional lesson plans bringing philosophical issues into closer connection with the interests these students express to us, e.g., a lesson teaching the philosophy of free will through Frederick Douglass's speech, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" And finally, I've supervised the projects of three "Research Apprentices" in neuroscience, through the BRAINYAC program at Columbia. The program aims to give high school students from minoritized backgrounds information about academic careers and a sense of belonging in science that they might not otherwise have. One of my students went on to win a scholarship to work with me as a Research Assistant for a full semester, on her own fascinating project using the philosophy of free will to inform research ethics in addiction science. She is going on to an undergraduate degree and likely a career in the life sciences, and she is going there with the skills, confidence, and network of support that the BRAINYAC program helped her cultivate. My small contribution to her education has been one of my proudest roles as an educator, and has convinced me that this kind of individual mentorship, and programs that work outside of traditional classroom structures, is where I will have the most significant impact on diversity in academia and on its accessibility and relevance to the people it historically and currently excludes.