

Advice on Crafting a Teaching Philosophy  
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Crafting a teaching philosophy is one of the most valuable exercises that a professor can go through. It is designed to offer your colleagues, supervisors, and prospective employees your rationale for why you teach as you do. Equally important, it serves as a personal record for you, documenting how you grow in your profession. A teaching philosophy is the first part of your portfolio at JCCC and thus, it is the reader's introduction to you. Following your teaching philosophy should be a personal statement which describes your goals and how those goals will be achieved. By Year Four in this process, you might wish to provide further explanations regarding the courses you teach, the improvements you have made, new curriculum, your professional development and service to the institution, as well as the documents that support your statements.

Following are some strategies for crafting a teaching philosophy.

### 1. Invention and Freewriting

You might begin your teaching philosophy by doing roughly 60 minutes' worth of freewriting that is designed to limber up your brain and get you thinking in creative, substantive ways about how and why you teach. Set a timer for 10 minutes for each of the Journalist's Questions below, and write nonstop until the time is up. If something does not come to mind, or you draw a blank, right "can write can write can write" until something comes to mind. Write down *literally everything* that comes to mind in response to the question. Don't second-guess yourself or worry if what you write is not on topic. Otherwise, you will hit a writer's block. As you freewrite, if you find a theme in regards to the question starting to coalesce, great! Go with it. If you hit a dead end, so what? Just keep writing about whatever else comes to mind. Conversely, set a timer, and record what you have to say in answer to the question. Rambling is perfectly acceptable. Use a long walk in the park and take along your recording device and simply perform a dramatic monologue in answer the questions, again, ten minutes for each. Your objective is to use this invention exercise to allow your mind to work without you necessarily telling it to. What do you come up with in the process?

Who?  
What?  
When?  
Where?  
Why?  
How?

At the end of the exercise, you should have quite a bit of writing (or recording) to pull from as you begin the formal drafting (composing) of your philosophy. Some will discover that all of the questions produced valuable ideas, explanations, and how-tos, and it is acceptable to use the Journalist's Questions as an organization strategy for your actual Teaching Philosophy. Others will discover that some of the questions "bore fruit" and others did

not. Read through your writing, or listen to your recording, and see if you can discover a “center of gravity,” a main idea that you will want to develop in detail by offering examples, stories, and rationales.

## 2. Your Teaching Philosophy Is a Reflection of *You*

Although applications for faculty positions will often request that a candidate’s teaching philosophy be limited to a page, the JCCC Faculty Portfolio does not require a page limit, nor does it require that all teaching philosophies look the same. You have the freedom to create a document that best articulates who you are as a professor, both in and outside your classroom, and you should not be bound by arbitrary rules.

## 3. Strategies for the formal drafting of your philosophy

The best way to add substance to your philosophy is to use a variety of illustration techniques. Below are some of the most helpful:

- Anecdotes, Short Stories, Extended Examples

Actual stories of what takes place in your classes and detailed examples of what takes place can help you personalize your philosophy by allowing readers to visualize more effectively how you teach, inside a classroom, during your office hours, and in whatever mentoring roles you perform with students.

- Using a quotation that works as an overall theme for what you wish to write

Perhaps you have a favorite philosopher, teacher, or spiritual leader whose work has inspired you and helped you articulate your own ways of learning and teaching. Some find it helpful to begin the philosophy with a salient quotation from that person and then explain how that quotation encapsulates your own ideas, methods, and approaches to teaching.

- Statistics and factual information regarding enrollment trends, classes, assessment tools (if applicable), research

Supporting your statements with factual evidence can bolster your confidence and allow you to demonstrate your familiarity with pedagogical trends and theories. If you are engaged in classroom assessment, discussing an assessment tool that you created why that tool enhances your teaching will lend itself to convincing and compelling details.