



## **TEACHING STATEMENT**

During my education, I have been fortunate to be supervised by several exceptional scientists teaching me how to tackle questions in Biology, but before everything inculcating me on how to think critically and build scientific constructs. I must acknowledge that their guidance and mentoring have inspired my vision of academia where research implements and values teaching at all stages. This shows in an article co-written with a colleague recently published in *All About Mentoring* discussing how to assess the pedagogic relevance of novel research discoveries in Animal Behavior Science. I strive now to excel in my field of research as much as I am eager to pass on my experience by offering motivating guidance to students I am able to interact with. My broad scientific training and teaching experience make me a more flexible teacher.

I strongly believe that a successful teaching approach is based on a clever combination of using knowledge sharing methods and participative learning strategies. I consider the main role of a teacher to be a facilitator of learning. To this end, I am using student-centered pedagogical methods. When acting as a lecturer in classical format courses, I try to create an interactive environment in which each student can actively participate during the lesson. To do so, I always organize my course in a way that incorporates at least one active learning activity which promotes engagement among students and facilitates a positive and interactive learning experience. These learning activities take the form of quizzes, role plays and debates around a theoretical point or results of recent studies, and allow students to better grasp the theory and important concepts presented during the current or previous lessons.

I have acquired a valuable pedagogic experience as a teacher assistant and as a lecturer by teaching in different course formats. As productive and positive teacher-students interactions are important, I enjoy teaching in regular classes, small groups or directly in one-on-one situations. During my undergraduate studies, I was fortunate to take numerous problem-based courses. Later, I played the role of the tutor. This educational method focuses on the collaborative work between students. During problem-based courses, the motivation to solve problems becomes the motivation to learn. In small tutorial groups, students analyze problems, conduct discussion, present viewpoints and establish the learning objectives under the guidance of the tutor. My goal as a lecturer was to guide the discussion between the group members and, by asking substantive questions and challenging students to think critically, I was able to ensure that students more readily achieved the learning objectives. This educational approach enhances the acquisition of knowledge, develops communication and self-directed learning skills and above all uses individual background experience of each student and a group's diversity as a cumulative strength. I take advantage of this valuable experience to recreate such a dynamic learning environment in other course formats. To this end, I use diverse pedagogical tools to build an atmosphere that encourages involvement and participation.

Having the ability to assess the students progress is critical. I put a great deal of emphasis on continuous evaluation throughout the learning process, which helps to identify strengths and weaknesses among students and ultimately facilitates a more productive learning and enriching environment for students. In preparing course materials, I believe that it is necessary to define clear and realistic learning outcomes before every lecture that I present as well as highlighting overall

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objectives at the start of each course. I generally devote 5 to 10 minutes at the beginning of every lecture to ensure that the main concepts from the previous lesson have been adequately understood. This takes the form of a brief recapitulation of the material presented earlier followed by directed questions to the class. This allows me to acquire feedback from my students that I use to adjust my teaching approach in order to offer them the best teaching experience possible. I believe that the teaching process does not stop at the end of the lesson and I make every attempt to assist students outside of the classroom. Teaching in different academic programs from undergraduate to graduate courses offered me a wonderful opportunity to connect with students with various background and individual experiences. As a result, I gained critical experience in how to adjust my teaching and advising approach according to the needs of the students, which helps me to continue to grow as an educator.

Working with students, regardless of their academic level, requires patience and dedication and I recognize the need to devote significant time to my students both within the classroom and laboratory. For me, it is also very important to supervise undergraduate and graduate students' research projects. I value the importance of mentoring undergraduate and graduate students at different formative levels of their journey to become the next generation of scientists. My teaching goal has always been to develop students' curiosity and thirst for knowledge. I believe that learning "*how*" is equally as important as learning "*what*". Through constructive discussions, I immerse students in the process of building an argument, to communicating an idea or an informed opinion; skills that will be crucial during their academic progress and relevant in an everyday basis. I truly hope that my teaching approach will help my students becoming skilled thinkers.

My scientific and personal journeys in different multicultural academic environments have made my appreciation and sensitivity of cross-cultural interactions continually growing. Over the years, I have been fortunate to mentor students, collaborate with colleagues, and interact with faculty members and professional employees from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. I am using this life experience to develop and offer pedagogic and mentoring approaches to my students that embrace and include diversity. I gain a valuable experience in supervising and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students, in particular women and individuals from different ethnic minorities in higher education during research projects. I believe that I was able to successfully guide them during their first hands-on experience in research by listening to their individual needs and adjusting my pedagogic approaches accordingly. It is also very important for me to take an active position in the university life. For example, I served during 3 years as the representative of the PhD Biology students at UQÀM. I earned a great experience in addressing academic-related issues being raised by students.

Overall, my aim is to offer students the opportunity to discover the fascinating world of Fish Ecology, Marine Biology and Animal Behavior sciences.