

## Teaching Philosophy: A Message to My Students

I take an individualistic approach to teaching that is manifested in numerous ways. I see my role as more than a disseminator of information. Providing information is relatively easy, but it is important that you are challenged and that you learn to think and to apply the various concepts presented in class in other aspects of your lives. These abilities will enable you to successfully tackle the many unique and seemingly insurmountable situations that are a part of life. Life is not a series of multiple choice tests, and you need the "tools" to face the endless challenges that life in today's society will present you.

Too many students are unable to apply seemingly "unrelated" information in unique situations. This stems largely from a neglect of theoretical perspectives and short-term interest in only learning what seems to apply to one's daily life as it currently exists. Furthermore, the education system's decreased interest in mathematics and logic has led to many of our students' inability to solve problems. It is critical that each student takes an active role in the learning process. My course assignments, exams, and classroom environment are designed to be consistent with this overall teaching philosophy. I prefer essay exams that force you to integrate a variety of concepts; but if objective questions become a necessity (e.g., in large mass sections), they require that you demonstrate an ability to apply the key concepts (i.e., the questions do not merely assess one's ability to memorize terminology).

I feel that it is important to instill in you an attitude that you should strive to perform at your maximum potential and that it is more important to compete with yourself rather than with others. Too often our (meaning America's) students get completely consumed with the notion that the only thing that matters is their rank order in a class. Although I do have relatively high expectations, I have learned during my more than 20 years of teaching experience that students strive and perform in line with teachers' expectations. Over the years, numerous written student comments confirm that I am a demanding and challenging professor, but a student in one of my classes summarized it well: "Dr. Homer is very professional. She works hard and expects the same from you." I am happy to say that each semester many CSULB students meet those expectations – and then some. In addition, I am notorious for demanding good grammar and writing skills for all assignments performed outside of the classroom (i.e., I refuse to accept assignments that are poorly written).

I have found that my reputation as a demanding professor "sets the stage" and "primes" students to work hard in my classes. My approach outlined above necessitates that I be available for one-on-one sessions outside of the classroom and that I respond promptly to questions sent via e-mail. I do not believe that the "sink-or-swim" approach is most effective (at least at this level), especially when so many of you came to college without solid communication and learning skills. No matter how often I have taught a particular course, I revise it each term to reflect current thinking/knowledge and to "fit" the uniqueness of the class.

I do believe that it is important to keep my own political views, religious views, personal beliefs, etc., out of the classroom. Sometimes, I may inadvertently "slip," but that likely happens because of my openness and frankness. Perhaps the one belief that I hope at least some of you adopt is that doing the best possible job that you are capable of is very important. I do believe that "nice guys finish first in life," that being truthful is a virtue, that one should think about the consequences of their behavior before acting, and that one should consider others' feelings whenever appropriate.