

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Roland G. Scott
Sept. 12, 2008

Teaching Style

I believe that people comprehend and retain information better when they are in a comfortable mindset. To this end, I prefer to keep my classroom atmosphere relaxed and, to a certain extent, informal. For example, I consider humor to be an important mnemonic tool for fact-based presentations as well as an excellent catalyst for starting in-class discussions on more abstract material. A conversational tone must be maintained to avoid the disengagement that can result from a strictly pedantic approach. I strongly believe that a presentation which does not encourage comments or questions on the part of the students has failed in its purpose. To this end, I am a proponent of a smaller class size, which gives more opportunity for interaction.

Expected Outcome

I expect my students to leave the class with a foundational understanding of the topic, not just a collection of facts. For example, in a beginning programming class, I would place a much higher priority on developing problem-solving ability than on remembering all the syntactic details of the language. In my experience, the most successful classes are the ones that continue to influence one's thought months or even years after they are taken. By the end of the semester, I want my students to be able to reason about new problems in the subject and to be able to communicate those thoughts with others.

Evaluation Methodology

I do not grade based on effort or subjective level of improvement. I expect the students to have reached a certain uniform level of understanding. If a student has not reached that level of understanding, then he or she should not be indicated to have passed the class. When at all possible, I prefer to evaluate students through their performance on meaningful projects and exams that require *critical thinking* and the *application of concepts* rather than the memorization of details.