

# Teaching Statement

**Teaching Philosophy.** As a teacher of biology, I aim to inspire an appreciation for the beauty of nature and a fascination in discovery. Beyond learning facts as a means to fulfill an obligation or make a grade, I hope my students, both in the classroom and in the laboratory, will develop a connection with the subjects they study. Although environmental issues such as habitat destruction, extinction, and emerging diseases can sometimes lead to a debilitating despair over conservation needs, perhaps these issues will also emphasize the importance of biology and the potentially significant contributions to be made in basic science and toward biomedical and conservation applications. Experiments and field studies can be a fun part of that process.

Although I majored in zoology as an undergraduate at Michigan State University, a Philosophy instructor was one of my favorite teachers. He inspired my interest because of the freedom of discussion and thinking he afforded in the classroom. He allowed me to draw on my background knowledge and connect the subject matter with my outside interests and culture.

Because students learn in different ways, I think it is important to integrate several methods of teaching. In-class activities that engage students in discussion can facilitate learning. Writing assignments encourage critical thinking. Integrating lectures with labs provides the necessary context for understanding experiments. Some of my favorite learning experiences were during field-based course work at the Kellogg Biological Station and through the Organization for Tropical Studies. I believe that providing opportunities for informal conversations is important as well. Therefore, I try to be approachable both inside and outside the classroom.

My experiences as a graduate teaching assistant and research mentor in the lab have proved to me that teaching is a great way to learn. It not only broadens my conceptual understanding, but also strengthens my framework for conducting research and communicating methods and results. Therefore, I aim to offer students the opportunity to teach with short presentations of their work.

In the evaluation of learning, I believe a mixture of assignments and tests, rather than a single final exam, can most accurately reflect comprehension. By using a variety of teaching techniques and assessment I aim to maintain student involvement with the material and avoid stressing short-term knowledge as a means to success. Excellence in teaching will require constant refinement, and like research, should be regarded as a scholarly activity. Interaction with students and colleagues will be essential as I grow as a lecturer and develop a balanced curriculum to implement the mission of the department and produce excellent future biologists.

**Teaching Interests.** My teaching interests correspond to my research in disease ecology. I believe laboratory and field-based courses allow students to be actively immersed in the subject. I am confident in my ability to design courses in disease ecology, conservation biology, environmental physiology, and herpetology.