

Bill Watson

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Teaching Statement

One of my central motivations for becoming a law professor is to have an impact on the next generation of lawyers. I thoroughly enjoyed every year that I was a law student, due in large part to the classroom discussions and one-on-one conversations that I had with my professors. My goal is to give my own students as stimulating and rewarding an experience as I had and to prepare them for success in their legal careers.

In larger doctrinal classes, I plan to use a mix of lecturing to convey key concepts, fast-paced Socratic questioning to bring several students' voices into the conversation, and sample problems and small-group activities to ensure that every student is actively participating in every class. It is important to me that students feel engaged during class and that they leave with a clear understanding of the most essential material for the day. Both in and out of class, I aim to treat my students as junior colleagues and to model professional behavior for them by, for instance, clearly communicating expectations, meeting deadlines, and responding promptly to emails.

My approach to teaching has developed over several years, during which I have taught legal research and writing and served as a graduate teaching assistant. A consistent theme in my approach has been to focus on improving my students' analytic reasoning skills. I work with them to identify how different authors structure arguments and define key terms, and I guide them through hypotheticals designed to test the truth of those arguments' premises. Ultimately, I want my students to become adept not only at critiquing others' arguments but also at formulating their own well-structured and persuasive arguments.

I work hard to make myself available to my students, and I've been rewarded with consistently positive teaching evaluations. Students in my legal research and writing class said that I was "very approachable and responsive to student questions," that I "had a wonderful command of the classroom and mixed technical and real-world knowledge," and that I served as "an incredibly useful mentor and teacher." Similarly, students that I taught as a graduate student wrote that I "did a great job at facilitating discussion," that I presented "course material in an incredibly clear and effective manner," and that I was "extremely accessible and helpful outside of class."

In addition to teaching students in class, I enjoy guiding and supporting them in their legal careers. I frequently talk to students during office hours about my own experience as a commercial litigator and about the different kinds of legal work that might interest them. I'm also committed to advocating for my students in their job searches: when I write letters of recommendation or talk to prospective employers, I strive to give a detailed summary of each student's individual strengths. It's immensely rewarding to know that I'm playing a part in preparing students for the legal profession and helping them achieve their career goals.