

My primary reason for choosing a career as an academic is my love of teaching. As an attorney representing major corporate clients (my career prior to academia), I never felt that I (Steven Abraham *qua* Steven Abraham) made a difference in anyone's life. In teaching, I often have a meaningful impact on people, and few things give me greater pleasure.

My love for teaching makes me extremely concerned for and about my students, and I believe that this concern shows. My door is always open (figuratively, as well as literally) and I regularly encourage students to come to see me for any reason. My teaching evaluations and the fact that I often receive requests from students to be their advisor confirm the fact that my students sense and appreciate my concern. Some of my most gratifying moments come when I receive cards and letters from students thanking me for having been a positive influence in their lives.

I consider my greatest strength in teaching to be my knowledge of and ability to communicate information to my students, and evidence supports me. On every course evaluation I have ever received, my highest marks have been in these areas. On many occasions, former students will see me later in their careers and will tell me how much they learned in my courses. Another aspect of my teaching that has been favorably received is my attempts to integrate personal experiences into my classes. In my law courses (especially labor and employment law) I can often illustrate a particular concept by talking about a case in which I was involved personally. Students seem to enjoy hearing about real-life situations, and learning about actual cases helps them see that the concepts they are taught do have "real world" application.

One distinctive aspect of my teaching style is that I insist upon class participation in all of my courses (provided the class size makes class participation feasible). I have several reasons for this. First, students find it tedious to hear me lecture non-stop. A different voice is often a welcome change. Second, it is a way for me to assess whether the students understand the material I am trying to teach. The most important reason for my insistence on class participation, however, is that, in my opinion, it demonstrates an essential aspect of learning that cannot be demonstrated in any other manner. I believe strongly that it is not enough for a student to be able to reproduce information on an examination after studying for several days. It is equally important that a student be able to understand a question, think about it for a short amount of time, and communicate a well-reasoned response. To me, this is especially critical in today's business world, where those skills are often indispensable. I recently received the following comment from a student: "I don't like the fact that 10% of our grade is based on class participation. I don't have to talk if I don't want. I shouldn't get docked for that." I think this student is mistaken and I will remain firm in that conviction.

As I have become more comfortable in the classroom and with the subject matter I teach, I have made it a goal to increase the use of technologies in my courses. I developed a web course (MBA 530 - Employment Law) for delivery in Fall 2000. In addition, I have started having my students use Lexis (HRM 462) and a collective bargaining website (HRM 459). In the future, I will continue to explore ways to utilize the internet, databases that are relevant to the courses, I teach, etc. I also plan to require my students to utilize better emerging technologies.

Another aspect of my teaching that should be mentioned is my grading policy. My course grades generally tend to run the spectrum from A through C-. I do my best not to fail students, unless they are making no effort to pass the course, but I do assign C grades when students' work and performance have earned that grade. As I often explain to my classes, I do not assign C grades to punish the students who earn them. Rather, I assign C grades to make the A grades I assign that much more meaningful. If student X does all the work, participates in class regularly, gets high grades in all the assignments, etc. and receives an A in the course while student Y does no work, is frequently unprepared, etc. but still earns a B, student X's A is less meaningful. Again, it is not my desire to punish students that induces me to assign C grades. Rather, it is my desire to make high grades truly meaningful to the students that receive them.

In sum, while I do have flaws, I believe that I am a good teacher and my love for teaching will make me strive to improve my classroom performance. I aspire to be the best teacher I can be and will continue to work on building my strengths while eliminating my weaknesses.