

Dr. T., 2 Aug. 2007
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

It is somewhat obvious and Lowman confirms that to be the most effective teacher, I must excel in the areas of **intellectual excitement** and **interpersonal rapport**. With a mastery of these two facets, I will prove to be effective at conveying the subject matter which I am responsible for. However, the duties of a teacher at West Point extend outside of the classroom and beyond the subject matter, and I am charged to be a **role model** as well. Thus my teaching philosophy is to excel on three dimensions: delivering intellectual excitement, developing interpersonal rapport, and being a role model.

Intellectual Excitement

Above all, an effective teacher must know the subject material inside and out. The instructor must be well rehearsed with the reading, homework, labs, design project and other required work that the cadets will encounter, and should anticipate certain questions. Questions that are not answered in class should be answered via email or in the next class, to show commitment to cadet learning and to confirm ones intellectual authority. The material must be conveyed in a clear and engaging manner, to spark the interest of cadets in the classroom and to fuel their interest outside the classroom. Capturing their interest is a prerequisite to engaging them with the subject matter. The cadets must be inspired to learn on their own, in order for them to fully appreciate the material. A positive attitude and enthusiasm from the instructor promotes this, along with frequent practical examples of why the course will be of use to the cadets as Army officers. Humor is also welcome, and the pace should be comfortable and varied to maintain interest during the lesson. Every lesson should be a performance!

Interpersonal Rapport

The purpose of the instructor is to offer an opportunity for discussion, provide interpretation of, and put a human face to the material. This cannot be done unless the instructor is absolutely approachable so that the cadet never hesitates to contribute to the discussion or to reach out for help. Developing rapport does not produce immediate results, but every day is a new opportunity to move in the right direction. Humor in the classroom, chatting with cadets before class starts, going to cadet sporting events and even visiting the barracks as AOC promotes a sense of caring for the cadet as an individual. I once visited a cadet in the hospital, who was grateful for my concern. The instructor should also be available before, during and after class to answer questions or to provide additional instruction. Although I strive to be challenging, this should be done with an intention for the cadet to succeed. Reward should be offered for success, while counseling and constructive encouragement should be provided when the cadet fails.

Role Model

Serving in a position of academic authority, the cadets view me as a role model, even if without realizing it. My actions and my presence must be professional, both inside and outside of the classroom. Professional behavior is only the minimum standard. My actions and service outside of teaching should also inspire cadets to do more as well, for themselves and the community.