

Teaching Philosophy and Methods

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** Syllabi from recently-taught courses are available at my website, luchsveta.org. **

Teaching Literature and Culture

Aims: I design my classes so that students not only acquire cultural and historical knowledge but also develop the central skills of a liberal arts education such as critical thinking and writing. As they analyze complex cultural products, my students develop the ability to recognize and build meaning from significant detail and they learn how to articulate sophisticated, evidence-based arguments.

Atmosphere: A successful classroom experience begins with the energy that the instructor brings to the classroom. The energy I bring is cordial yet challenging: I combine good humor, passion and enthusiasm with high expectations for substantive and precise analysis.

Discussion: I use a discussion format in my courses in order to promote engaged learning. My strategy is to formulate well-defined questions on genuinely ambiguous, complex topics. This gives students a starting framework while pushing them to think critically and independently. I often ask students to write short, informal prep assignments that feed into class discussion, or I have them talk in small groups before bringing discussion back to the whole class.

Lecture: My personality as a lecturer is characterized by enthusiasm, good humor, passion, intellectual rigor and clear organization. I incorporate focused mini-lectures into my discussion-based courses and can speak engagingly at greater length whenever a formal lecture format is appropriate.

Writing: I taught numerous composition-focused courses during my graduate study at UC Berkeley and independently developed a composition-focused reader and curriculum. I still draw on this background to ensure that every paper I assign is a meaningful learning experience. My mantra is that "good writing depends on good thinking": only when students understand their own ideas can they present those ideas coherently, and only when they work to express their ideas in writing will they be pushed to further hone their arguments.

Teaching Foreign Language

Aims and Strategies: My language teaching is oriented toward long-term, advanced communicative proficiency. My lesson plans generally move from language input (readings or recordings) to student output. I design contextualized, content-centered activities in which students share information about themselves, play roles in imagined situations, or make decisions based on material they have read. Lesson plans for intermediate and advanced levels are increasingly content-driven.

Culture: I bring Russian culture into the classroom right from the start, both for its instructional content and its motivational effect. Beginning language students encounter elements of visual culture, such as the architectural *nalichnik*, the icons of Rublyov or the animated Cheburashka. Intermediate students learn songs by Okudzhava and Vysotsky, read poetry by Pushkin or Tsvetaeva and watch current-events-related video clips from the contemporary Russian media. (See my website luchsveta.org.)

Technology: Technology always enriches my lesson plans. In particular, I operate the site luchsveta.org, which presents video clips from the contemporary Russian media as a tool for language learning. I provide this resource as a service to the broader profession.

Grammar: I present Russian grammar in a way that helps students understand why form matters. A judicious amount of form-focused instruction establishes a foundation for long-term advanced proficiency. At the same time, I recognize that error is a natural, inevitable feature of a learner's developing interlanguage.

SLA Research: My language teaching is shaped not only by hands-on experience but also by the findings of research in second language acquisition. I am influenced by the concept of "negotiation for meaning" by research on the order of acquisition, etc.