Unit 9

Values and Ethics

Objectives

1. Become aware of the values you hold, teach, and practice as a teacher.

2. Develop and clarify ethical principles related to your teaching.

3. Know strategies for preventing academic dishonesty and incivility.

4. Understand ways to encourage integrity and respect.

   In the first part of this unit we examine values and in the second part we develop and clarify ethical principles for our teaching. Those beliefs that we hold most strongly are bound to influence our teaching, so it is important for us to become aware of our core values and how they influence our actions.

   Values and ethics are closely related. Respect for others and fairness are values that form the basis of ethical principles. These values also relate to the behavior of students and teachers in and out of the classroom. Behaviors related to issues of civility might include simple courtesies like not talking when others are speaking and more serious offences such as insults and physical assault. Academic issues related to ethics involve dishonesty, cheating in its various forms, and the promotion of integrity.

Values

Wilbert McKeachie has been giving practical advice on teaching for more than fifty years. In his book, *Teaching Tips* (2002), he has a chapter titled, "Teaching Values: Should we? Can we?" that includes a personal statement of a kind we rarely see in books of advice to teachers:

> I'm a strongly religious person, a humanist active in my local American Baptist church. I believe strongly that love and respect for other human beings is not a *relative* value -- simply a current norm taught in our society -- but rather a universal value that should guide the behavior of all human beings at all times. . . . I believe that no one has the ultimate answer to the question human beings have wrestled with since the beginning of human self-consciousness -- What is Good? Each of us must make a commitment to the best we can conceive of, to give our insights to fellow human beings, and to welcome their thoughts in order that we may come closer to ultimate truth (p. 292).

This is a statement of deeply held belief based on religious faith. One does not have to share that faith to understand the value and how it can influence teaching. But should we teach our values to others? McKeachie says, "we can't avoid teaching values" (p. 333), such as honesty and respect, and we should help students become sensitive to issues pertaining to values.

Activity:

Highlight the sentences or phrases in your teaching philosophy statement that indicate particular values. Will you try to teach these values? If so, will you do this explicitly or indirectly, and what methods will you use? Write your answers to these questions and, if it seems to fit, include this information in your philosophy statement.

Think about whether your values are represented in your syllabus, for example, in class activities, assignments, content, and policies? Should your values be explicitly stated to your students or implied by what you do as a teacher or both?

If you are working with a partner on the activities in our Guide, discuss your answers with your partner.

The questions in the above activity are ones that you should return to occasionally, perhaps whenever you review your teaching philosophy or do a self-evaluation of a course. Other great teachers have written at length about values. We recommend William James's talks to students that he appended to his *Talks to Teachers* (1899/1958), especially the lectures titled, "on a certain blindness in human beings" and "what makes a life significant." Also see Parker Palmer's (1998), *The Courage to Teach*.

Coming to understand our own values and the values of others is perhaps the best way to appreciate alternative value systems. Although, respect for persons may be a universal value, individual autonomy is not. As such, it would seem logical that finding a way to implement your values in your own way may represent the purest way to "be yourself" when teaching. The journey toward being yourself is also your own, as there is no known tutelage available for understanding and articulating who you are from a values perspective.

Diversity

For many teachers, embracing diversity represents a personal value. Having students with different cultural backgrounds, abilities and disabilities, can add different perspectives to class discussions because students bring a greater variety of experiences and viewpoints to the discussion (Lynn, 1998). However, greater diversity among students also has the potential to raise ethical dilemmas. For example, to what extent should special testing conditions be available for students with learning disabilities? When your class has a significant proportion of students of color, or when your class is homogenous as far as ethnicity or race, how do you approach discussions of ethnicity and/or race? You may not be aware of gay and lesbian students in class who might be offended by student comments. Will you challenge students who make prejudiced statements against any group? How might you challenge them in a way that is respectful, informative, and still consistent with your overarching value system?

Many graduate programs now include full courses, sections of courses, and workshops on diversity issues, although these might not be directly related to teaching. Two sources that you might find to be particularly helpful in supplementing diversity-based coursework you may have had are Nancy Chism's (2002) discussion of "taking student social diversity into account" and Barbara Davis's (2009) coverage of this topic. The following points are highlights of their advice:

- Make all students feel welcome by treating them as individuals with their own preferences and goals. Learning students' names, including ethnic names that you may have to struggle to learn to pronounce, is important.

- Provide opportunities for all students to fully participate, while recognizing that in some cultures speaking up is frowned upon. Students from those cultures can still contribute by asking questions and posting comments to online discussion blogs.

- Become knowledgeable about the various groups represented by your students. Understanding cultural and lifestyle differences and preferences will help avoid inadvertently embarrassing yourself or your students.

- Take care to be inclusive in your classroom. Use language that includes everyone (e.g., parenting, not mothering), and provide a range of activities that allow participation by all students.

- Be open to diverse views in discussions, but do not tolerate offensive comments. This is an example of teaching a value--respect for others.

- Consider doing additional reading and preparation such as talking with colleagues if you are uncomfortable imagining how you might deal with insensitive comments.

Critical Thinking Interruption

Imagine that you have a class of 50 students of mixed gender and race, and other diversities of which you are not aware. In a discussion of child development, a student says, "I think if you let little boys play with dolls they might grow up to be homosexuals." What will you do in response to that statement?

Ethics

Activity

- What ethical issues concerned you most as a student?

- What ethical issues (will) concern you most as a teacher? These issues may be of concern to you now or may be issues you anticipate in the future.

In 1991, Tabachnick, Keith-Spiegel, and Pope conducted a survey of 1000 members of the American Psychological Association (APA) on ethical issues in teaching. The 481 respondents replied to questions about both their behavior as teachers and whether these behaviors were ethical. Some of their major findings from this survey include:

- Issues of competence (e.g. teaching material sometimes not mastered and teaching without adequate preparation), were frequently identified by respondents as an ethical concern and challenge.

- Teaching when distressed and encouraging competition among students are examples of judgments that respondents found difficult to rate.

- Controversial issues such as sexual thoughts about students or giving credit rather than salary for student assistants produced bi modal results.

- These following additional issues were identified as common concerns of teachers:

  - Bending the rules for selected students who seem more likeable or needy.

  - "Boundary blurrings:" attending student parties; dating students; asking or doing small favors for students.

- Sexual relations with students or other faculty (freedom of association vs. abuse of power).

- Some issues of concern may seem relatively unimportant but proved controversial to respondents nevertheless: selling unwanted complementary textbooks; and a favorite, "There was no consensus among respondents on the ethics of hugging students" (p. 515).

A survey conducted by Braxton and Bayer (1999) of 950 faculty members at a variety of colleges and universities produced a list of seven categories of teacher behavior that should not be tolerated. The seven categories with an example of each category follow:

- Condescending negativism - insulting students.

- Inattentive planning - not having a syllabus.

- Moral turpitude - having sex with a student.

- Uncommunicated course details - not stating exam dates.

- Particularistic grading - bias for or against certain students.

- Personal disregard - teaching under the influence of alcohol.

A survey of 482 students on two campuses showed that students' views of ethical behavior are generally similar to the views of faculty (Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, & Allen, 1993). "Students rated professors who give some students unearned advantage and who act in ways that embarrass students to be the most unethical" (p. 149). Overall, students were "less condemnatory than teaching psychologists were toward themselves" (p. 161).

A survey of 261 graduate teaching assistants (Branstetter & Handelsman, 2000) produced some disturbing results. Most respondents reported practicing many behaviors that they believed to be unethical, including teaching material they have not mastered, teaching courses outside their specialty, and teaching when too distressed to be effective. Only about 20% thought that

their training for teaching was adequate. Less than one-third had any training at all for teaching

and "fewer than 6% reported receiving any ethics training before teaching" (p. 46).

Selected Ethical Dilemmas

    Self Disclosure

       How much should you tell students about yourself and what should you ask them to tell you about themselves? For the teacher, some disclosure helps students know something about you and that you experience problems and joys just as they do. Jim uses his children and grandchildren as examples in class. He talks about applying operant conditioning to controlling his exercise and has students design a behavior modification program for him as a class project.

       We should avoid asking students to disclose anything that would embarrass them or others. In some situations, there may be things we should not know about students, even if they want to tell us. This is a special concern in psychology classes where teachers may be seen as therapists. Even teachers who do have clinical training should not engage in any activity that appears to be therapy when they are in the role of teacher.

       Writing assignments, such as journals in which students relate course content to personal experiences, have the potential to lead to students' self-disclosures that could place you as the teacher in possession of sensitive information. While a rare occurrence, this might happen despite providing students very clear instructions and examples for assignments. Such situations point out the necessity of being familiar with support services with experts trained in handling sensitive situations available at your institution for students. In an introductory community-building exercise, Mary asks students to email her three things about themselves that others in the class most likely would not know about them. She stresses that they should select things that they do not mind having others in the class know. She then compiles these into a list and students attempt to identify which students submitted which items. On a few occasions, instead of submitting a list of three facts, students have written lengthy essays containing very personal

information, one of which resulted in a referral to the campus counseling office, and another, to a financial aid counselor.

Critical Thinking Interruption:

What are the limits on what you will disclose about yourself to your students? What limits would you place on what students should disclose to you? How will you inform students about those limits?

Maintaining Boundaries

Is it OK to meet for coffee with a few students from your class? What about having a few beers with them at the local bar after a challenging final exam? The truth of the matter is that these types of issues can arise frequently in the life of a professor, perhaps even more frequently for younger professors who are sometimes fairly close in age to their students.

Many professors actively attempt to relate to their students so that students see them as approachable. Being approachable can be very important as it opens up the possibility of responding to specific student questions in a one-on-one setting and encourages students to seek out answers to questions. The culture of your institution often helps define where to set boundaries when interacting with students. For example, many institutions encourage faculty members to meet their advisees in informal settings, such as over coffee, in order to get to know students and their goals and better advise them on course selections and future plans, while other institutions might discourage any interactions between faculty and students that could potentially appear to be social in nature. At many schools serving as faculty advisor for a student organization comes with expectations of attendance at the organization's events both on and off

campus. Some institutions invite faculty members to assist freshmen with moving into dorm rooms and welcoming students and their parents to campus. At other institutions, inviting groups of students for a meal at a faculty member's home is the norm as is attendance at sporting events and on-campus student performances. Mary previously taught at a college that required faculty to attend a minimum of two such events each semester to show support for students and increase faculty rapport with students. Most institutions, however, leave decisions of whether or not to participate in student sport and social events up to the individual faculty member.

Where to set the boundary with socializing with students outside the classroom requires serious consideration and is dependent on several factors including your comfort level in such settings, your view of how this might affect in-class teacher-student relationships, as well as your age and the age of your students. For example, relationships with graduate students on one's research team are often more social in nature and sometimes involve eating a meal together or watching a local baseball game. One caution is to be sure whenever you make a decision about outside interactions with students, that you are careful not to place yourself in any situation that could potentially lead to unethical behavior or reduce your effectiveness in the classroom. Alcohol-use (particularly excessive or underage drinking) or situations that might be perceived as sexual harassment raise serious ethical concerns

Critical Thinking Interruption:

What boundaries do (or will) you set with students? Why have you established boundaries in this way? How might your establishment of these boundaries facilitate student learning?

For an extended discussion of ethical issues in teaching and sample cases, you might consult *The Ethics of Teaching: A Casebook* (Keith-Spiegel, Whitley, Balogh, Perkins, & Wittig, 2002) and *The Ethics of Teaching* (Strike & Soltis, 2009).

Academic Integrity

In *The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity,* the <u>Center for Academic Integrity</u>, a consortium of over 200 colleges and universities, defines academic integrity as "a commitment even in the face of adversity to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action." (Center for Academic Integrity, 1999, p. 4) In this section, we will focus on issues related to the first value, honesty. Research quoted in the document just quoted found that at the time of publication, over 75% of college students surveyed indicated that they had cheated at least once during their college years (p. 2), The number was even higher for college-bound high school students (80%), the majority of whom did not consider cheating to be a 'serious transgression" (p. 2).

As teachers we have an obligation to act ethically and to teach certain values, one of which is honesty. This section focuses on strategies for addressing issues related to academic integrity.

Critical Thinking Interruption

Why do students cheat? List three or four reasons why you think students might cheat on tests or plagiarize on written assignments.

In surveys of more than 6,000 students from a variety of colleges and universities, Davis and his colleagues (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992) found that rates of cheating in college ranged from 9% in a sample of women at a small, private college to 64% of men at a small regional university. The research focused primarily on cheating on examinations; 80% of

respondents said they simply copied from another paper or used crib notes. When students were asked why they allowed other students access to their answers, the most frequent reason (range of 76% to 88%) was because the other student was a friend. Other reasons included: "He was bigger than me." "I felt sorry for them." "I didn't like the teacher.", and "I knew if I got caught nothing would happen." This last reason seems particularly important. Davis's own research and that of others whom he cites indicate a widespread view that "everyone cheats" and that it is "a normal part of life. . . Academic dishonesty is reinforced, not punished" (p. 17).

A major reason that students cheat is that teachers seem not to care about it or do anything when they find that it has occurred. You may recall teachers who sat in the front of the room reading a book during an exam. Two ways that teachers show they care about integrity are: to be actively involved in the administration of examinations and the process of completing writing assignments; and to understand students' problems and establish a classroom climate of trust.

In *Tools for Teaching* (Davis, 2009, Chapter 38), Davis provides suggestions for preparing and administering tests that make cheating difficult, including using multiple forms of the test, having students sit in alternate seats and rows, if that is possible in a crowded classroom, and having proctors walking around the room. You also should talk to your students about cheating, how you are trying to prevent it, and what happens when cheating is detected.

Preventing academic dishonesty is a process that requires teachers to be consistent and explain to students why they believe that honesty and integrity are so important. Strategies to consider are clearly presenting your policies on the first day of class in tandem with your values of fairness and integrity or pointing out that the procedures you use to prevent cheating are used in the interest of fairness to all students.

Increased use of emerging technologies has made cheating easier (Hartnett, 2011), and is believed to contribute not only to an increase in cheating, but a rising belief among some students that using technology to cheat is not ethically wrong (Etter, Cramer, & Finn, 2006). Schools.com, an Internet site containing trends in higher education, reported that 71% of students surveyed did not believe that copying from the Internet was plagiarism (Schools.Com, 2011). The Internet contains sites where students can purchase completed papers, find solutions to textbook problems (e.g. Cramster) and videos demonstrating new ways of cheating (e.g. How to cheat on any test). Mobile devices, such as cell phones that can be used to take photos of tests, message a friend for an answer, or search online for an answer, and store information for tests make detecting cheating more challenging. Many institutions use commercial programs, such as turnitin to detect plagiarism on written assignments.

Activity

What will you do if you think a student is cheating? How will you handle this situation if it is clear that you are right? This is something you should consider before it happens. Write a plan detailing how you will move from *thinking* that cheating is going on to concluding that it is going on, and the actions you will take in such a situation.

Establishing a climate of understanding and trust to prevent cheating is even more important than knowing how to catch and deal with cheaters. The following suggestions have been adapted from McKeachie and Svinicki (2006, p. 116-117):

- Reduce the pressure. For example, do not put too much weight on any one exam or assignment.

- Make reasonable demands by making assignments of realistic length and difficulty. It is better to set modest goals and find ways to challenge students than to ask too much at first.

- Develop group norms supporting honesty. Involve students in designing a system to promote honesty, like the honor system. Remember that fairness is the ethical principle of most concern to students.

- Preserve students' sense of individuality. Learning their names is the most effective way to do this when class size permits.

- Talk about integrity as a value.

Plagiarism presents some different problems. Understanding and trust are just as important here, but in addition, students need some specific instruction in the writing process. Do not assume that students, even seniors, know what plagiarism is. In some departments your course may be the first one in which students have had a writing assignment or, if they had one before, where anyone talked with them about plagiarism. You should discuss this at the beginning of the course, when you discuss different forms of honesty, and then again when you make specific writing assignments. Your discussion should include:

- Forms of plagiarism: (a) Handing in an entire paper written by someone else. Show students that you are aware of Internet sources that provide completed papers. (b) Copying entire sections from an article or other source without quotation marks and a citation. (c) Paraphrasing without giving credit by a citation.

- Give examples of the second and third forms, including good and bad paraphrasing.

- Clarify college penalties for cheating, department policy if there is one, and your penalties; put these in writing in your syllabus.

Know what you will do to detect plagiarism and to confront alleged perpetrators. You might add that process to what you wrote for the previous activity. However, there is a delicate balance here between detecting offenders and maintaining the climate of trust you may want to develop. Rebecca Howard (2001) pointed out the importance of working with students as they develop their idea for a paper, critiquing early drafts (at least one) without grading them, and providing thoughtful comments on the final paper. She recognizes that in large classes this may be difficult, if not impossible. Refer back to our discussion of writing assignments in Unit 6.

Part of your preparation for dealing with academic dishonesty should be to find out the extent to which you will have administrative support when you have to apply penalties for cheating. Know who the people are who *will* (not just who *should*) back you up: department chair, college dean, student honor court, or others. There have been cases where instructors have been left out on a limb, while others sawed it off. Confronting cheating is difficult and time-consuming, but it is the right (i.e., ethical) thing to do.

Activity

Write an academic integrity statement for your syllabus. How and when will you talk with students about these issues? How do these things relate to your philosophy of teaching?

On line courses present other challenges to maintaining integrity. For good advice on dealing with cheating and related issues in those courses see the Distance Education Report, "Promoting Academic Integrity in Online Education[1]" (2010).

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[1] Requires free subscription to *Faculty Focus*

Civility

A few years ago an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* began: "It's every professor's nightmare: losing control of the class. And if anecdotal evidence counts for anything, it's happening more and more" (Schneider, 1998, p. A12). Well, anecdotal evidence should not count for much, but the incidents of abuse described in this article did happen, and teachers should be prepared to respond, whether to the common problem of students talking during a lecture or the infrequent insults or threats.

Respect for others is the value in question here. Some of the points made in our discussion of integrity apply here. Understand the situation in which students find themselves, including the demands of your course. Model respect for others and discuss it as a value. Treat students as individuals (again, we stress the value of learning their names) and establish some kind of personal relationship.

The large class situation concerns many teachers. Jim's Saint Louis University colleague, Michael Ross, has over 300 students in his General Psychology class. Jim has visited this class in a large auditorium and was amazed at the level of attention from this mass of students, so this approach seems to work. Ross describes what he does when students talk during lecture:

1. I stare directly at them while I lecture. Once they make eye contact with me, they get the message.

2. Walk to where they are sitting and lecture directly to them.

3. Stop lecturing a stare at them until they stop talking.

4. Same as step 3 followed by saying that only one of us can talk at a time, and if they prefer that it be them or me. I wait for an audible reply.

5. Same as 4, but as I dismiss the class I walk to where they are seated and ask them to see me after class. I tell them either to stop talking or drop the course.

6. I have never had to do this, but I would request their removal from the class.

Extreme emergencies may occur. For example, two students in an evening class at Jim's school were prepared to fight because of a dispute. You should not worry much about these unlikely events happening to you, but you should know how to reach your campus security personnel in the event something unanticipated does occur.

Of course, civility is a two-way street; teachers also may insult and threaten students. Sometimes, this is simply subtle sarcasm, but at other times the insults are direct: "Most of you aren't smart enough to pass this course, and you won't." Sexism and racism may be overt or covert, and sexual harassment continues to be a problem. Any sign of lack of respect for students by teachers can become an occasion for a reaction by those students, individually or collectively.

The ethical teacher will work hard to behave civilly toward students, and when mistakes do occur, these teachers learn from these errors and work hard to prevent their recurrence. However, there are less obvious forms of incivility to which teachers should be sensitive. Judith Gibbons (2000) described developmental vulnerabilities in college students. A developmental vulnerability is a problem that people face because of their age and stage in life. For example, separation from one's mother is a problem for an infant, but not for most teenagers. Gibbons points out that certain "groups of students might be particularly vulnerable. For example, students whose first language is not English may be worried about oral presentations in class.

Ethnic minority students often feel pressure from increased visibility. . . . Students with disabilities continue to suffer from negative stereotypes. . . . Gay and lesbian students are often the 'invisible minority' and may suffer from heterosexist assumptions implicit in some course materials" (p. 87). Civility requires not that we "walk on eggs" and avoid discussing anything that might conceivable offend anyone, but rather acknowledge that these issues exist and that we are sympathetic to those who experience them.

Teachers who respect their students will be respected in return. You can begin to respect students by trying to understand them as individuals and as a group at a particular stage in life with the attendant vulnerabilities. Making it clear to students that you value honesty and fairness will promote integrity and enable you to maintain an ethical classroom. For an excellent and extensive discussion of all the issues in this Unit see Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002).

Critical Thinking Interruption

Develop a sketch of a situation in which several students are disrupting a class, first by talking, then by challenging the teaching in an unreasonable way, then by insults. What should the teacher do? How might such a situation be prevented?

Conclusion

The values that professors hold are difficult to hide. Professors speak and interact with students on a daily basis, and represent important parts of students' lives. Therefore, it is important for us to reflect on our own personal values, how these values are communicated to students and how students interpret these values inside and outside of class. We appreciate the value of the environmental context in coming to understand the wholeness of individual behavior. In this spirit if teachers wish to maximize the chances that their students will learn and benefit from the class, they should consider their personal values, even if these values are not the lessons to be taught according to the syllabus,.

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