



Philosophy

Let me begin by saying, “I do not believe in formalities. My name is Mark and I want you to feel free to use my first name when talking to me. Like you, I am just another person on this big planet. Do not be afraid of me. Do not be afraid to get to know me. Do not be afraid to come and talk to me or ask me questions. Your experience in anatomy class this semester, as well as mine, will be a better one if you take this advice to heart.”

I do not believe that I am owed any special respect from my students just because I am a professor. Instead, I believe that I should, and I want to, earn your respect through the quality of the education I provide for you during the semester. For many years I have been passionate about anatomy, both as a perpetual student who is never satisfied with his knowledge and as an educator who wants to figure out the best ways to help people learn this exciting topic. As a result, I think I am a pretty good anatomist. If you are enrolled in this class because you want to learn, then my passion and experience should excite you. There are few things I enjoy more than watching people get excited about learning something new, especially if I can help in the learning process. I am committed to do my best to make this the best anatomy course that I possibly can. In the end, you will be the judge of whether or not I reach that goal and I am excited to place that judgement in your hands.

I feel I should be up front with you regarding two important assumptions that I make to guide my pursuit for excellence in teaching and designing a university level course. First, I assume you are enrolled in this course because you want to learn anatomy. With that in mind, the course is designed for students who really want to learn. Interested students will be exposed to a phenomenal foundation in anatomy. For the interested student, this course may be one of the most positive experiences in their college education. I am committed to do all that I can to not only teach you anatomy, but to teach you how to learn anatomy. I believe that an institution of higher education is a place where people come to learn and to expand their horizons. My course is designed to afford you that opportunity. Second, I assume that my experience and knowledge in anatomy education, one which spans a broad spectrum of teaching and course development over the years, provides me with a strong understanding of what to include in a quality undergraduate anatomy course at an outstanding university. My aim is to provide a solid foundation course designed for the motivated university level student. Based on feedback from good students, I believe the course hits the bull’s-eye or is, at least, somewhere near. If your mind is open to learning anatomy and you are willing to work hard, then you are in a good place, a place that will allow you to develop a strong anatomical foundation.

I also believe that my efforts are only part of the education equation. When it comes right down to it, the bottom line in your education is completely up to you. That is, you will only get out of this course, and as a matter of fact any education opportunity, exactly what you put into it. With this fact in mind, I encourage you to work hard, to not make excuses, and to do your best. This kind of effort on both our parts will spell success.

With this philosophical preamble behind us, let me share a few additional insights. This course is designed to reward excellence and there is no limit to the number of students who can achieve excellence. The course is not designed as a weed-out course. Everyone enrolled can attain the grade of A. I do not believe in a curve that puts a limit on the number of A grades. In this course everyone can earn an A by achieving a performance of 90% or better. Reality, however, predicts that this will not happen. However, the reality for the past thirty-one years is that an average of 23% of the students in the class achieved a grade in the A range and another 28% achieved a grade in the B range. These are positive results. The students in these grade categories typically study on a daily basis, do not get behind, and do not try to predict what is important to learn, but instead learn everything they are taught. I make every effort to write exams that clearly cover the material that I teach and that evaluate whether or not the students can problem solve with the information they have acquired. I am not interested in tricking students, I am only interested in helping them and myself evaluate how much they have learned and whether or not they are good thinkers.

Now let me end by addressing a few final concerns. While I am honestly willing to help anyone learn this material, I cannot study it for you. I will help by answering any of your questions. I will help you understand the best learning strategies for success. I will help with encouragement along the way, if you but ask. But the bottom line is that you have to work hard and dedicate a daily effort to your anatomy studies if you want to learn the material, which will then lead to a good grade. Finally, I unfortunately can make no promises to those students who are not in the course for the right reasons. To those who assume they know what is important and what is not, or who are always second-guessing why they need to learn certain things, or who have a negative attitude, I am sorry. I cannot make promises to this type of student about their learning experience because I do not comprehend that attitude toward education.

The take home message is — this course will challenge you. But challenge is good! Isn’t that the reason we attend an institution of higher education, to challenge our intellect and increase our knowledge? And though this course will challenge you, you can excel through hard work. For the motivated student anatomy will be an excellent learning opportunity.