

## Ryan S. Hemsley

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### Teaching Philosophy

I hold that a hallmark of an academic is the ability to disseminate knowledge effectively. I have worked to hone this ability while teaching sixteen sections and assistant teaching thirty sections at Michigan State University. My objective as a teacher is to help students get as much as possible out of a course. How much students get from a course is a function of how much effort they put into it, how well they understand the material, and how well they are able to apply the material. Therefore, an effective teacher must address each of these three areas.

#### Help Them Reach

A teacher that struggles to motivate students would make a poor manager if they needed to motivate employees. Fortunately, there is a lot of quality research on motivation. Therefore, my teaching process—not just the content I teach—is evidence-based. While research has discussed this topic in depth, one theory will suffice for the purpose of this statement: Valence-Instrumentality-Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964).

Students highly value getting good jobs and being good at their jobs, meaning they are highly motivated to pursue what they believe is instrumental to these valued outcomes. Therefore, a teacher primarily needs to help students recognize how a subject is instrumental to their career goals. One way I have found effective is illustrating abstract concepts with real world examples—through videos, Wall Street Journal articles, or scenarios—involving organizations they recognize and skills they want to develop. Comments from students about the motivating effect this can have include:

*“Unrivaled enthusiasm with a true ability to demonstrate the importance of the course... he did the best job I have seen engaging students.”*

*“Ryan had an expansive knowledge over all of the various topics and provided us with interesting facts about stuff or connected the ideas to various real world scenarios.”*

*“Really helped understand challenging concepts by giving the class real world examples.”*

Once students believe the course is instrumental to their valued goals, a teacher should help student expectations about the effect their efforts will have on their performance. One way I have found effective is to provide risk-free opportunities to gauge their performance with interim feedback, such as through ungraded comprehension quizzes following reading assignments or providing students with the opportunity to submit an assignment early for feedback and an informal grade. Such practices enable students to course correct before their grade is negatively affected:

*“Ryan truly showed an interest in our success. This motivated me to really get to know the material. GREAT, detailed feedback on presentation and paper and others that will help me improve my skills.”*

*“Graded strictly, but was always willing to help students out.”*

*“One of the best instructors I’ve had at Michigan State. Ryan truly wanted all his students to do well and provided us with every resource necessary to achieve success... I wish more instructors operated on his level.”*

#### Help Them Experience

Once students are motivated to learn, what is taught and how it is taught becomes of consequence. I have found lectures are most effective when students experience the content. For example, I try to

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first provide an easily discernable structure for the content and then guide students through a lively discussion, often in small groups. Rather than hearing information, this helps students to teach each other and make real time connections. When students experience their own connections, rather than a teacher doing it for them, the information sticks better:

*“He did a good job breaking concepts down in a way that we would be able to understand them and he encouraged group interaction and discussion.”*

*“Very effective in getting students involved and allowed for active participation. He was also extremely knowledgeable and was well prepared every class. Very active in helping student outside of class as well.”*

Importantly, even after students understand the content, a teacher frequently needs to persuade students it is true before they internalize it. Everyone has a theory about how business work, believes they are an above average leader, or is tempted to think they are immune to cognitive biases. I have found various activities and exercises can strip away any delusions of grandeur and help them recognize precisely how they can apply course content to improve. The minutes that follow after they realize they have something to learn are precious teaching moments. In a way, every preceding thing exists mainly to create those brief moments—as more learning occurs at these moments compared to any other time.

*“I really liked all of the activities.... My favorite was the one we did about teamwork. It was a really fun and cool way to learn about working in teams and how you can actually affect the overall performance.”*

*“I enjoyed his lectures and wouldn't miss them. His teaching techniques are so well thought out and organized. The extra things he did to ensure our success, is a defo extra mile that makes him so great.”*

### **Help Them Apply**

If a student only knows how to use evidence-based practices in the classroom, then it was all a waste of time. I have found students get the most out of opportunities that help them learn to transform abstract knowledge into concrete solutions to real problems. One way is to apply skills through formal assignments, but I have informal opportunities effective as well. Informal opportunities include helping students apply what they have learned about leadership, teamwork, and conflict management to resolve issues with group projects rather than stepping in to do it personally:

*“He was specifically helpful in a very difficult process with a group member, and actually incorporated lots of the material we were learning with the situation.”*

*“He was so helpful and his love for this topic was what made me want to pursue this major. He was always saying how he wanted to help us in and out of the classroom and you could tell he truly meant it.”*

### **Teaching Effectiveness and Interests**

By following these three principles, I was pleased to receive 327 ratings with an average of 4.7/5.0, which places me in the top 10% across all department instructors for undergraduate courses. I have developed undergraduate courses for “Managing Organizational Behavior and Human Resources” and “Negotiations.” I will also teach an executive development course this fall on “Leadership and Decision-Making in Teams.” I have also assistant taught both hybrid and in-person MBA courses on “Negotiations” and “Creating an Ethical Organization.” I am both interested and confident in teaching these topics to various audiences and in various formats. I look forward to developing myself as a teacher as well as training current and future business leaders and researchers. Truly, teaching can have a profound effect on our students and on our campuses:

*“I wish every teacher on this campus could see how Ryan goes about his business, because it would make that much of a positive impact in every class here at MSU.”*