My objective in teaching is to get my students to think critically so that they can apply what they learn to everyday life. For example, in teaching about human memory, I present our current theoretical understanding of the organization of memory and then have students participate in several activities so that they can understand how the theories apply to everyday behavior. I work to incorporate the best practices of education in my classes. For example, in addition to traditional lecture, class discussion, and powerpoint presentation, I include a number of real-world activities that require students to apply the knowledge from class in different ways.

I have also developed a novel undergraduate seminar, entitled Cognition in the Wild. The course is designed to explore how our mental experience is connected to the environment. This is emerging as a hot topic area in cognitive neuroscience, with new papers on the topic published in the top journals in the field (e.g., Perspectives in Psychological Science). The course samples quite broadly from the literature, and includes readings from Psychology, Anthropology, Geology, Environmental Studies, and Ecology.

With Cognition in the Wild, I use the best practices of education to enhance the quality of my class. There is a collaborative learning component, that encourages class discussion and participation. Given the divergent background of the students, there is a healthy exchange of ideas. There is a writing component, which encourages students to write on a daily basis (in journals, thought papers, and a final term paper). Students also have to give a formal presentation of the ideas that they develop for their term paper. In addition, a portion of the class also includes a traditional lecture format.

I use my classes to get students to think critically, communicate effectively, and write with purpose. I try to get the students to think about how the material applies to real world settings. I have found that this helps to ground the theoretical discussion and directly address how the material relates to the real world. I focus my discussion on big picture concepts that the students will, hopefully, remember and incorporate into their life for years after the course.

Sincerely,

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