TEACHING STATEMENT   BENJAMIN MAKO HILL

Graduating PhD students have spent most of their lives learning as apprentices. From their first day of grade school to their dissertation defense, students learn everything from reading and arithmetic to sociological theory and multi-level statistical modeling from teachers who use that knowledge themselves. "I know something that I find useful," a teacher might say, "and I want my student to be like me."

In much of higher education – and in graduate and professional teaching in particular – this relationship breaks down. In business schools, where I teach most often, lectures are given by professors trained as academic sociologists, economists, and psychologists. Of course, very few MBAs become social scientists. I have seen how a failure to recognize this dynamic can lead to a lack of respect and connection between teachers and students treated as, "the folks who pay the bills."

Business school has also shown me that teaching that overcomes this dynamic can lead to transformative learning. Teaching across intellectual domains goes beyond the reproduction of skills and knowledge and becomes the creation of new knowledge in the context of students' personal experience. I understand that most of my students will not become researchers like me. I believe that in spite of this challenging relationship, and because of it, I can teach students in ways that surprise, connect, and enrich. In my teaching, I address this dynamic in three ways.

First, I strive to make my teaching relevant to my students experiences and interests. I always seek to communicate why the material I teach is relevant and how it will be useful. I have taught similar concepts to engineers, MBAs, and executives and have worked to refine and tailor my message for each audience.

Second, I attempt to involve students directly in learning. Even in large lectures, I engage students interactively in the discussion of examples from their experience and adapt my teaching to emphasize material they respond to more positively. In assignments, I challenge students to integrate course concepts with their experience and interests.

Third, and most importantly, I structure my teaching around explicit mutual respect. Before each lecture, I reflect on the total student-hours my teaching will consume. I realize that in every class meeting, my students give me dozens, even hundreds, of hours of their attention. I strive never to waste it. I continually seek feedback from my students so that my teaching is more relevant, useful, and important to them.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Over the course of graduate school, I have learned to teach from my mentors and have put this philosophy into practice in lectures and seminars to MBAs, engineers, executives, undergraduates, and Masters students.

Over the last three years, I have served as the teaching assistant for Professor Eric von Hippel's lecture courses on innovation where I have worked closely with students on the design and evaluation of their course projects. In these classes, I have developed, delivered, and refined a series of ninety-minute lectures as a guest lecturer. These lectures include a session on online innovation communities, a case study of consumer "hacking" of Canon cameras, and a practical lecture on attracting participants to online communities.

After positive evaluations from students, I have been invited to give regular lectures in MIT's Executive Education and Visiting MBA programs. These lectures have focused on managing innovation, user communities, and practical tools for innovating that include lead user methods, innovation toolkits, and the construction of vibrant user communities.

In addition to experience lecturing, I have also run a series of seminars for smaller groups of graduate students. Working with Professor Tom Malone, I coordinated an interdisciplinary seminar at the Center for Collective Intelligence. Working with Chris Csikszentmihályi, I organized and ran a graduate seminar on Free, Libre and Open Source Software in the Media Arts and Sciences program.

Outside of organizing my own seminars, I have guest-taught in a number of seminars at MIT Sloan, the MIT Media Lab, the MIT Program on Comparative Media Studies, Harvard Law School, the Stanford Design School, and elsewhere. Since 2011, I have also coordinated a seminar on empirical research into online cooperation at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard.

MENTORING

Of course, not all of teaching is unlike apprenticeship and I have enjoyed my experience as a mentor to developing scholars and researchers. I have had the pleasure of mentoring several undergraduates at MIT through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program. These students worked with me on both a full-time basis over the summer and in a part-time capacity over the academic year giving me experience both in day-to-day management and more hands-off relationships.

Additionally, I have served as an external advisor to two Masters degree students. I evaluated one thesis on technology design and am currently advising a second student in a social scientific analysis of a large free software community. As an advisor, I have enjoyed meeting regularly and engaging with the student over the course of his thesis research.

EXAMPLE COURSES

Undergraduate —

1. *Innovation in the Internet Age*: An introduction to the theory and practice of innovation management. Topics include traditional firm-based innovation as well innovation by users, hackers, user communities, and free and open source software developers.
2. *Quantitative Research Methods*: An introductory class on applied statistics for social scientists. Topics include basic statistical methods up to, and including, linear regression with programming exercises using real data.
3. *Computer Mediated Communication*: An overview of practical and theoretical issues related to computer-mediated communication. The class focuses on analyses of practice but also incorporates reading and lectures on theory, implementation, and design.

Graduate —

1. *Topics in Peer Production*: Seminar on foundational work as well as recent advances in the study and support of free and open source software, wikis, and remixing communities.
2. *Research Methods for "Big Data"*: An introduction to statistical methods and tools for finding and manipulating very large datasets. Topics include network analysis, analysis of unstructured text, and programming for massively parallel computing systems.
3. *Social Computing*: The theory, analysis, and design of large scale, computer-mediated social systems. Final projects will challenge students to execute a study of an existing community or to design or create a new system.