

# Teaching Philosophies



Dr. Peter Fossey  
Academic Developer; ADC  
[p.j.fossey@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:p.j.fossey@warwick.ac.uk)

## Goals for this session:

1. Practice asking and answering philosophical questions about your own teaching
2. Familiarise yourself with the idea of a TPS: what it is for, and what might be in it
3. Begin to formulate key ideas for your TPS

# What is Philosophy?

The practice of asking and answering philosophical questions:

Philosophical questions are those which a discipline or system of knowledge invites or raises

...but which can't be resolved using exclusively the techniques and resources provided by that system.

# What is Philosophy?

“Philosophical questions are questions that are raised by some way of understanding life in the world that we're naturally drawn to use, but which can't be answered satisfactorily using that method.”

T. M. Scanlon, [interview](#) for *Conversations with History*



# What is Philosophy?

Empirical sciences: how do experiments yield knowledge?

Psychology: what is the relationship between mind and body?

Religion: is there anything spiritual? (Is there a deity?)

Law: does the law have any authority? (On what basis?)

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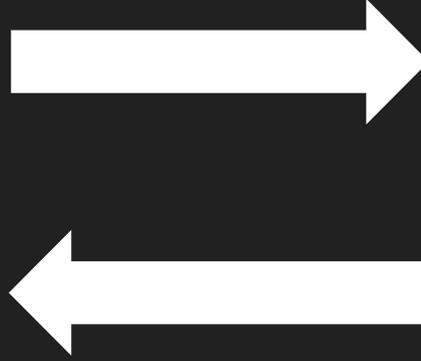
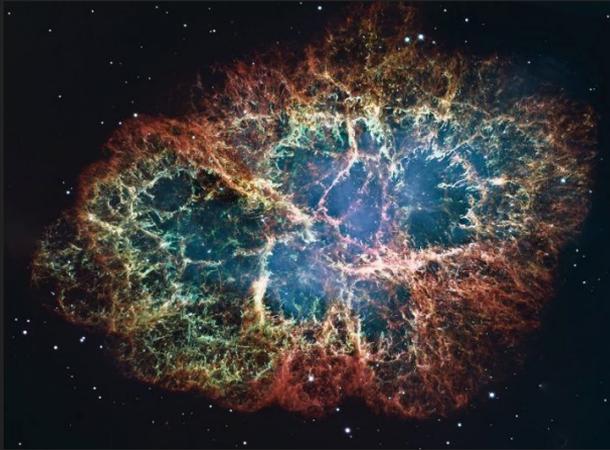
Law: does the law have any authority? (On what basis?)

Philosophy: what is philosophy?

## Pair Activity:

1. Find a partner, and call them. (Don't hang up this call.)
2. Imagine you have just walked out of the best teaching session you have ever given.
3. Imagine that your partner is a friend who works in a different department
4. Tell your partner all about your amazing teaching session.
5. While you are the listening partner, ask questions and try to encourage your partner to explain the **reasons and values** behind their actions.
6. Make a note of the most interesting question(s) you arrive at.
7. Swap roles after 7 minutes.

# What is a teaching philosophy?



# What is a teaching philosophy?

Think about YOUR teaching practice, the context in which you teach, and your identity as a subject expert.

What questions does reflecting on your teaching practice raise, which cannot be answered from within that context?

# Small Group Activity

Think about your teaching practice, the context in which you teach, and your identity as a subject expert.

What questions does reflecting on your teaching practice raise, which cannot be answered from within that context?

Discuss these questions with your group.

# Some primers:

What is the purpose of higher education:

For the lecturer/academic?

For the learner?

For society?

To what extent are those purposes compatible? How might they come into conflict?

What should happen if they come into conflict?

# Some primers:

What responsibilities do I have to my students as learners?

How does learning occur?

How is my teaching technique supposed to bring about learning?

How does my disciplinary research relate to my teaching?

# Signature Pedagogies

What is distinctive about teaching in your discipline?

What does the practice of research in your discipline consist in?

How does teaching in your discipline support students in becoming subject experts, or members of an academic community?

i.e., what does research-based teaching in your discipline look like?

# Signature Pedagogies

History:

“Can beginning students learn to do history the way professionals do it? Of course not. But my studies have found they can learn to execute a basic set of moves crucial to the development of historical mindedness. I want students to learn six such moves, or cognitive habits: questioning, connecting, sourcing, making inferences, considering alternate perspectives, and recognizing limits to their knowledge”

Calder, L. (2006) “Uncoverage: Towards a Signature Pedagogy of History Surveys” *The Journal of American History* vol.92 no.4, p.1358-1370

# Signature Pedagogies

Economics:

“Ultimately, if economic education and its signature pedagogies aim to teach students to “think like an economist,” as most economists would argue, then the critical question becomes: What teaching practices, content, and skills are best suited to reach that goal? There is a lack of disciplinary consensus on the answer to this question. As a result, we argue here that there is currently no “signature pedagogy” in economics.

Maier, M.H. et al (2012) “Is there a Signature Pedagogy in Economics?”, in Chick et al (eds.) *Exploring More Signature Pedagogies* (Sterling, VA: Stylus)

# Signature Pedagogies

Economics:

“[G]raduate students in economics are so narrowly trained to develop technical research skills that they are ill prepared to teach the broader “economic thinking” skills needed to address complex interdisciplinary problems facing the world economy.”

Maier, M.H. et al (2012) “Is there a Signature Pedagogy in Economics?”, in Chick et al (eds.) *Exploring More Signature Pedagogies* (Sterling, VA: Stylus)

# Signature Pedagogies

Chemistry:

“Undergraduate laboratory research... has been viewed as a signature pedagogy for any STEM field for several decades [but] there are real constraints on how many students have these experiences.”

...

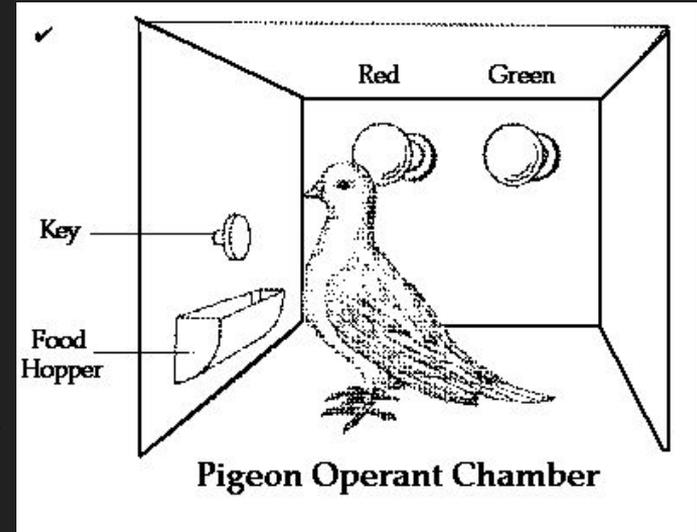
“Several pedagogies have the potential to bring the characteristics of undergraduate research to other places in the curriculum, increasing how many research-like courses students encounter in their undergraduate education”

Gravelle, S. and Fisher, M.A. (2012) “Signature Pedagogies in Chemistry”, in Chick et al (eds.) *Exploring More Signature Pedagogies* (Sterling, VA: Stylus)

# Theories of Learning

## Behaviourism

- Behavioural modification brought about by application of pos. and neg. reinforcement
- Operant conditioning - highly effective!
- Learning is learning to do
- No space for metacognition; no appeal to context or development
- Impact on education - classroom management and LOs



# Theories of Learning

Behaviourism



# Theories of Learning

Behaviourism



# Theories of Learning



To learn is to understand new and more sophisticated scripts or models - i.e., ways to conceptualise and respond to stimuli.

## Psychological/Cognitivist Constructivism - Piaget

- Psychologist, concerned with development in childhood
- Learning is a matter of acquiring more complex schemata
- Capacity to learn is governed by stages of development (sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, formal operational)
- Early learning is driven by development, which is internal to the individual, and the outcome of biological processes
- Hence (actual) learning is relatively context-independent

# Theories of Learning

## Social Constructivism - Vygotsky

- Psychologist, concerned w. development in childhood
- Learning is a matter of being able to use more complex concepts
- Concepts are linguistic entities, and language is a social phenomenon
- Hence (actual) learning is irreducibly social, and heavily context-dependent
- Hence, learning has to be supported or “scaffolded”, and occurs in a Zone of Proximal Development



# Theories of Learning

Critical Pedagogy - Paulo Freire, bell hooks

- Concerned with social role of education
- Preparing students to be able to orchestrate change, promote reform
- Progressive, concerned with social justice

