

Statement of Teaching Philosophy **Emily Manetta**

The primary tenet of my teaching philosophy is that we all learn best by doing (this is also true of teaching itself). In classes that I teach, this means that problem solving is the main activity – problems that are meaty, involved, and above all, challenging. In Linguistics, problems take the form of the puzzles presented to us by natural human language and its use in the everyday world. Ideally, their solutions offer a glimpse into the underlying structure of language and how the human mind must work to generate it.

Students in my classes are assigned problems in class and problems to take home and solve. The solution usually involves not only recognizing a pattern (e.g. “passive constructions in English tend to look like this”) but determining how that pattern can be generated (e.g. “in order to derive a passive sentence, the grammar must look like this”). Because the puzzles I assign are often very difficult, I ask that students in my classes work together on each assignment. For many, this is the first time they have been required to work together, to participate in the give-and-take that characterizes so much of “real world” work, and to depend on one another for insight and criticism. The ability to collaborate, to listen, and to contribute effectively to the group is a crucial life skill that I hope my students take away from the course.

The other aspect of teaching that is deeply important to me is helping students to become better writers. I require that students write out their solutions to the puzzles and problems we approach in clear, careful, and thoughtful prose. This means that homework assignment write-ups can be many pages long, filled with detailed observation, argumentation, exploration of potential counter-arguments, and admission of limitations. Writing in-depth assignments defending your discoveries poses an exciting challenge for

students, and provides them with a great opportunity to become skilled analytical writers and speakers.

In the classroom, it is my goal that the students and I embark on a shared process of discovery, often by wandering into uncharted and unpredictable territory. On my part, this requires energy, enthusiasm, humility, and humor, and above all a deep sense of respect for my students. It is their research choices, their interests, and the diverse experiences they bring to the classroom that enhance their learning process (as well as my own).