

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My teaching philosophy stands on four pillars. First, I think **it is imperative to equip students with life-long skills and tools for knowledge and learning**. While it is important that Business students acquire knowledge and information about the law and how it relates to business, it is impossible to teach them the correct legal resolution to any given problem. My objective is to ensure that students appreciate the essential role of law in various social and business contexts, identify legal issues and business risks and consider how to reconcile conflicts and mitigate risks using a wide array of legal approaches. To accomplish this objective, I employ various pedagogical methods. I first introduce and explain the relevant general concepts and fundamental principles through a variety of techniques including online quizzes and class presentations. Using case studies, real life examples, and simulations, I then challenge students to apply these basic principles to diverse situations and I encourage them to explain in a rational and coherent way how and why they reached a certain conclusion. In class I emphasize the importance of legal reasoning, logical argument and critical thinking in dealing with unforeseeable events in our fast-paced ever-changing world. My evaluation methods include class participation, group presentations and written assignments such as essays and research papers. My exams are substantially based on fact-pattern essay questions with few or no multiple choice questions. My classes often include two parts – a lecture and a tutorial – to give students ample opportunity to practice their knowledge. I also hold voluntary tutorials with the help of my teaching assistants. This teaching approach helps students improve their oral communication, writing and research skills and present their ideas more effectively. As a member of the **Faculty Council Undergraduate Curriculum Committee** (2015-Present), the **Chair of the department's Curriculum Committee** (2013-Present), **coordinator** of several courses offered by the Law & Business Department (2011-Present) and department representative on **TRSM Teaching and Learning Committee** (2011-2013), I have led and been involved in many curriculum initiatives, shared my experience with colleagues and encouraged them to use similar teaching methods.

Second, I believe that **student engagement is crucial to any successful learning process**. My goal is to create a stimulating intellectual environment with a climate of mutual respect that will encourage students to assume an active role in this learning process. My enthusiasm and passion for teaching in general and about law in particular serves to motivate and inspire my students to work harder and improve their skills and knowledge. Teaching has always been an enjoyable and rewarding experience for me especially since my teaching and research interests often intersect and enrich each

other. I frequently revisit my teaching objectives with a view to incorporating innovative scholarship and seek relevant, topical cases that put knowledge into context and emphasize its relevance. I am always eager to get to know as many students as I can and make sincere efforts to tailor a curriculum that reflects their diverse backgrounds and interests and responds to topics that emerge from class discussion. I also incorporate real life examples, including my own as a professor working in a University (a relationship which entails legal rights and duties), and encourage students to share their experiences, ask questions and express their ideas. This approach piques students' curiosity and increases their engagement and interaction. They are inspired to experiment with their ideas, challenge opinions and critically assess competing arguments. In an effort to engage timid students, I encourage students to send me short comments or questions via email before or after class. I then select pertinent comments or questions and discuss them in class with the students' permission. Finally, I always make myself available, maintain an open door policy and encourage students to email me or stop by my office for informal discussion on course material or other matters such as future plans and career goals.

Third, I think that **reflection is pivotal to any process of experiential learning**. My aim is to create an environment that allows for a process of supervised exploration and reflection. While this aim can be achieved in various settings, the best way is through small learning groups in a clinically relevant setting. Therefore, in 2012 I **initiated and developed the Law & Business Clinic** course (LAW68A/B). In this course, students represent real clients and develop practical lawyering skills in problem solving, file management, and client representation. They learn to apply legal theory and analysis to real client problems. Most importantly, I teach them how to learn from and reflect upon their practical experience. Through class presentations and written assignments, I encourage students to move beyond the mere description of the file and the present state of law to assess the adequacy of law and legal processes in context and the impact they each can have on achieving justice. By engaging in this authentic learning experience students learn about poverty, disempowered communities and lack of access to justice in Canada. They discuss the potential functions that law can serve in society and are encouraged to develop a critical view of the legal system. It gives me great pleasure to observe first-hand how students develop a strong sense of social responsibility, professional commitment and ethical standards. Developing the Clinic course was not an easy task and in its fourth year is still a work-in-progress. I constantly introduce improvements into the course curriculum. For example, last year I have developed a detailed memorandum to students which explains the methods of performance evaluation and includes assessment forms with detailed rubrics for each of the tasks assigned in this course. I have conducted comprehensive research on clinical legal education, participated in a **Panel Discussion on**

**Pedagogy** at the Canadian Academy of Legal Studies in Business conference in May 2014, and took part in the 2015 Ryerson University Faculty Conference: “Tomorrow’s Classroom” in May 2015 where I shared my experience in running the Clinic as an Innovative Experiential Learning.

Fourth, I view **teaching as a process of learning, experimenting and reflection**. Every semester I challenge myself by revisiting my teaching methods and experimenting with new techniques. For example, despite the high rate of attendance, it is often hard to foster rigorous class discussion of the subject material if the students do not read the relevant material for that class. Many colleagues face the same challenge. I therefore decided to experiment with various approaches. The last experiment has been very successful. I created short quizzes which the students have to take online prior to each class. The students’ response was very positive and the quality of class discussion has improved beyond recognition. I also take very seriously the faculty course surveys completed by students and have constantly implemented student input and feedback. For example, some Clinic students recommended that more training on effective client communication should be offered and suggested bringing in students from past years to talk in class about their experience. In response, two classes were added and are dedicated to communication skills, where I also invite some former students to discuss in class their personal experience in tackling challenges related to client communication. Furthermore, I strongly believe that I have developed and will continue to develop as a teacher with the help of my peers and colleagues. I have consulted many of them for suggestions on how to teach my courses. I have also incorporated comments received from peers on the teaching assessments and am confident that my teaching has improved over time due to this constructive feedback. That is, while serving as a member of the **Faculty Council Undergraduate Curriculum Committee**, the **Chair of the department’s Curriculum Committee**, course coordinator, and department representative on **TRSM Teaching and Learning Committee** has provided me with ample opportunities to observe and assess teaching and curriculum initiatives of others, it has also been extremely beneficial for my own teaching growth, exposing me to a great variety of innovative and engaging teaching approaches and techniques. Finally, **my participation in pedagogical discussions, panels, and conferences in and outside of Ryerson** has allowed me to engage in and to contribute to student learning and intellectual growth and to teaching quality at multiple platforms and levels of the academic community.