

## What Does “Teaching Philosophy” Mean? A Case Study: *Professor X Teaching Philosophy*

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### Abstract

*In higher education, teaching philosophy is a crucial tool for conducting and assessing teaching quality. Yet, there is limited focus on exploring its essence. Teaching philosophy can be interpreted as a strategy in education and pedagogy, illustrating how teachers tackle the teaching process. This involves both pedagogical and educational aspects. A different perspective on teaching philosophy is to view it as the direct transfer of philosophical knowledge from teacher to students. This qualitative study on higher education is conducted by looking at Professor X's social and educational background, teaching in different settings, the professor's methodology of teaching philosophy from basics as well as their broader academic work, which includes writing, research, and public presentations. The research investigates the teacher's self-reflection on philosophy and the development of a “teaching philosophy from scratch”, exploring how it supports teachers to push philosophy beyond conventional academic environments and a particular teaching philosophy. The findings suggest that there is a connection between teaching methods and research and publication endeavors. The outcomes extend beyond the typical association to highlight the essence of the link between research and teaching. This deepens our insight into the meaning of “teaching philosophy” as a diverse process that includes teaching, writing, academic endeavors, and public contributions.*

**Keywords:** *teaching philosophy, higher education, pedagogy, students, educational and research style.*

### Introduction

This paper aims to explore the potential of teaching philosophy through a case study of *Professor X's* educational and research methodology, defined as teaching philosophy from scratch, which could be used as an educational and existential tool, understood as the lifelong practice of philosophy as a kind of social critique (Mitrović, 2017). Professor X is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, who teaches at the City University of New York (CUNY). The subject of this case study has been anonymized at their own request in our

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regular correspondence during this research. Due to this request, we will use the third-person pronoun “they” instead of “she” or “he.” Direct references to Professor X’s published works are coded with X and the year of publication, and, along with the other codes and their professional CV, are known to this journal’s editor.

We opted for the case study methodology because the qualitative study produced promising results, exploring student expectations and perceptions of different educational philosophies and teaching styles at the University of Belgrade (Mitrović & Mitrović, 2022). The second reason is the evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of recent literature reviews (Ngene, 2023) and standard educational surveys administered to a sample of educators in specific schools (Abd Elkader, 2014).

The concept of Teaching Philosophy is ambiguous. Initially, it can be interpreted as a strategy in education and pedagogy, depicting how teachers tackle the teaching process. This involves both pedagogical and educational aspects. The teaching philosophy statement is a teacher’s story of their subjective and objective perspectives and approaches in educational and pedagogical processes at the start of their professional career. Certain researchers posit that the pertinent literature provides various strategies for constructing a teaching philosophy statement. However, existing literature does not encompass an epistemological dimension for developing or evaluating a teaching philosophy. In addition to individual perspectives on educational approaches, teaching philosophy is influenced by the traditions, organizational norms, and community expectations within a specific field (Schönwetter et al., 2002).

A different perspective on teaching philosophy is to view it as the direct conveyance of philosophical knowledge from teacher to students. In both situations, learning and studying unfold in the same way. This paper challenges the perceived divide between teaching and practicing philosophy. It argues that effective teaching—grounded in Socratic dialogue, skill development, and intellectual humility—is a fundamental form of “doing” philosophy. Professors who actively engage with students, question assumptions, and cultivate critical thinking exemplify the core of the philosophical endeavor (Cahn et al., 2018). However, teaching philosophy often requires innovative methods that incorporate elements unique to individual instructors while remaining universally accessible and understandable to diverse audiences (Lipman et al., 1980). Nevertheless, such an approach is generally challenged at the micro and macro level.

The issues at the micro level can be divided into: a) What faculty expect from philosophy teaching: In graduate programs, it is not uncommon for faculty to review students to determine teaching assistantship assignments. A pervasive and problematic belief in such programs suggests that high student satisfaction with courses may be seen as an indication that a graduate student is not prioritizing research. As a result, some students may even be advised to lower their evaluations deliberately to avoid this perception (Concepción, 2018). b) What professors of philosophy expect from students: nearly 80% of philosophers report that at least 61% of their students each year are general education students—individuals taking a single philosophy course to meet distribution requirements, with no intention of declaring it as a major. Furthermore, almost 50% of philosophers noted that over 80% of their students fall into this category (Bradner & Mills, 2018, p. 10). When asked what they hope these students gain from philosophy, almost half of

the instructors cited “intellectual virtues” as the key takeaway. When given the choice between focusing on the content of canonical texts, which is easier to convey, and fostering intellectual virtues through more nuanced teaching methods, the majority preferred the latter (Bradner & Mils, 2018, pp. 9-16).

At a macro level, higher education, particularly in the humanities and philosophy, is currently facing a significant crisis in the United States. Between 2013 and 2014, the number of philosophy bachelor’s degrees declined by 6.6% (from 7,920 to 7,398), marking the largest drop in the 27 years of available data for the discipline. Despite this decrease, the number of degrees awarded remained more than twice as high as in 1987 (AMACAD, 2016). One of the challenges is also that philosophy as a profession is not economically profitable (College NPV, n.d.; Data USA, 2022; Zhu, 2024) on the one hand, and it is faced with cutting student loans on the other hand. The situation is compounded by the potential elimination of the federal Department of Education, which would result in substantial funding cuts for public higher education (Blad, 2024; Ferguson, 2024; Greene, 2024).

The opening segment of this paper will involve the clarification of the terms and subjects being studied. The next section of this paper will present the previously mentioned issue, i.e. the relations between students and professors’ expectations through a comprehensive introduction to the sociological setting during Professor X’s studies at Columbia University.

Sections four and five are related to the next issue at the micro level, i.e. faculties’ expectations from teachers, having in mind the balance between research and teaching philosophy by evaluating Professor’s X time at three universities in the USA, establishing links between syllabi, research interests, and types of publications as well as specific roles as expert and formal teacher in various teaching contexts.

The following section will delve into the qualitative features of X’s recent publications, which correlate with the intermittent courses taught over the last thirty years. I will scrutinize the teacher’s self-reflection on philosophy and approach to building a “teaching philosophy from scratch”, examining how it aligns with X’s commitment to advancing philosophy beyond traditional academic settings and a type of teaching and practicing philosophy as a response to issues at the macro level. The last two sections will address the results presented and conclude the study with individual approach of self-reflected teaching philosophy from scratch as promoter of critical thinking, philosophy – doing and living.

### **Defining the terms and subjects of the examination**

The concept of teaching philosophy highlights the shared epistemological aspects of studying philosophy and the professor’s approach to teaching. Such similarities are rooted in philosophy being part of or connected to all fields of science and particular disciplines. Education is a science closely connected to philosophy in constructing a theoretical base and its practices. “Philosophy needs the clear and precise expressions of education, and education needs the guidance of philosophy. Educational philosophy can be defined as a form of applied philosophy that handles education in a philosophical manner or method” (Saritaş, 2016, p. 1534).

Suppose that a teacher’s methodological narrative embodies their teaching philosophy. The previously mentioned issue could be summarized through several concrete research questions in this study, such as: how can teachers make use of their professional and life experiences, professional education, and knowledge of sociological issues to promote the sharing of philosophical knowledge with students and support society and institutions? Do research-based educational philosophies face challenges when it comes to beginning teaching from scratch? In other words, is there an individual who advocates for a radical and humanistic philosophy in their scholarly work and writings, which are designed to facilitate the self-improvement of readers, along with a formal teaching strategy that lays the groundwork in philosophy for young and adult learners entering college?

Considering the last questions, current research emphasizes the relationship between philosophical preferences and teaching styles (Abd Elkader, 2014; Saritaş, 2016; Snyder, 2006).

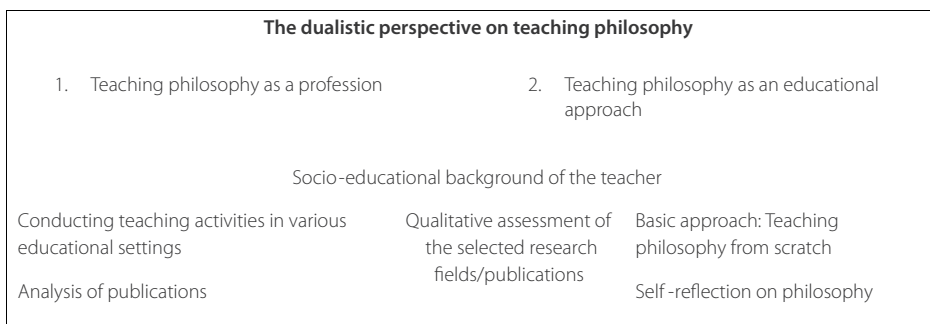
Grasha emphasizes that teaching styles should be based on the conceptual base that forms teaching or educational philosophy (Grasha, 2002, p. 92). Without one concrete educational philosophy, the teaching style is hollow. Syllabi taught in various disciplines are based on scholarly research and typically have an underlying philosophical, theoretical, and empirical base.

Relevant studies highlight the usage of syllabi that are intended to improve students’ ability to apply accepted knowledge to a variety of tasks in their professional and personal lives (Zack, 2023a). As outlined in the next sections, X utilized recommended textbooks in their teaching method, blending them with the educational philosophy grounded in their research and publications.

Drawing from previous theoretical and educational viewpoints, I present a methodological framework that will be applied in this case study (Figure 1).

Figure 1

*Examination of the epistemology of teaching philosophy*



Besides the more specified categorization of the educational philosophies emphasized by Grasha (2002), they are commonly classified into four categories, perennialism, progressivism, essentialism, and reconstructivism, or even five similar categories, perennialism,

idealism, realism, experimentalism, and existentialism (Bondi, 2007). However, some other classifications define educational philosophies as behavioral, liberal, progressive, humanistic, and radical (Abd Elkader, 2014).

Synthesizing the features of various teaching styles and approaches, some authors emphasize and combine educational philosophies with the teaching styles described as an expert, formal, authority, personal model, facilitator, and delegator teaching styles (Grasha, 1994).

The teacher with an expert teaching style possesses the knowledge and expertise that students need. The teacher strives to maintain their status as an expert among students by displaying detailed knowledge and challenging students to enhance their competence. They are concerned with transmitting information and ensuring that students are well prepared. Furthermore, the teacher with a formal authority teaching style possesses status among students because of their knowledge and role as a faculty member. They are concerned with providing positive and negative feedback and establishing learning goals, expectations, and rules of conduct for students. They are also concerned with the correct, acceptable, and standard ways to do things and providing students with the structure they need to learn. Moreover, the teacher using a personal model teaching style believes in teaching by personal example. This teaching style establishes a prototype for thinking and behaving, oversees, and guides. It shows students how to do things and encourages them to observe and emulate the educator's approach. The facilitator teaching style emphasizes the personal nature of educator-student interactions. The teacher using this style guides and directs students by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives, and encouraging them to develop criteria to make informed choices. The overall goal is to develop students' capacity for independent action, initiative, and responsibility. They work with students on projects in a consultative fashion and try to provide as much support and encouragement as possible. The delegator teaching style is concerned with developing students' capacity to function autonomously. Students work independently on projects or as part of autonomous teams. The educator is available as a resource person at the request of students (Grasha, 1994, p. 143; Zhang, 2006).

Some authors have also suggested a very branched classification and combination of teaching styles, classroom processes, and learning styles. These interdependent relations include the teachers' specific roles, behaviors, and personalities (Grasha, 2002).

All of those styles and approaches might be understood as a mix of the most appropriate decision-making choices associated with our researchers' personal characteristics and the complex interactions of sociological conditions in education and teachers' professional careers. This case study will investigate some of those interconnected indicators.

### **Teacher's self-reflection on studying philosophy as response to micro-level studying expectations**

Professor X's professional CV with extensive biographical details provides a solid base for conducting this examination. Looking at the supplied materials in the most general way, I find an optimal combination of research, scientific, and teaching activities by X.

This combination is one of the necessary conditions for personal and professional achievements in a discipline’s organizational and institutional development, in this case, philosophy.

When reflecting on X’s personal socio-demographic background relevant to our study, X highlights three key elements: date of birth, origins, and the tensions that arise from differing career choices between Professor X and X’ mother. Born in the middle of the 20th century, X grew up as the only child in a single-parent household. X’s mother (second generation of Jewish immigrants from Europe) was a professional artist and had a rich artistic talent that was not widely acknowledged or commercially successful. X determined the identity of their own father in their teenage years. He was an African American gardener who had another marriage and children from it.

X’s mother wished for her child to pursue a medical career, but X personally disagreed with that choice. X decided to pursue psychiatry as a compromise, but later recognized the necessity of obtaining a medical degree. Being a diligent student, they were awarded a scholarship and began studying psychology, but switched their major to philosophy during their senior year. The reason lay in teaching approaches. While psychology courses stifle student questioning and discussion, philosophy courses embrace it.

Second, we will give a short evaluation from the perspective of the sociology of professions and the relevant background based on which young people or adults have been making choices concerning their fields of study and future professions both at the time when X started their academic career and now. From that perspective, we can better comprehend the times when Professor X chose philosophy as a future profession and when X was teaching philosophy. The common denominator for both these eras, besides their parents’ wishes, involves the (latent or manifest) motives of students and their perceptions of prestigious professions back then and now.

Professor X’s academic career practically started at Columbia University after receiving their BA degree in 1966; shortly after that, in 1970, X defended their doctoral dissertation on *The Epistemology of C.I. Lewis* under the supervision of Professor Sidney Morgenbesser. According to Professor X (2021, p. 128) and their research biography:

“Lewis was a metaphysical pragmatist who attempted to connect language and thought to physical reality through his distinction between the *a priori* and *the given*. Lewis was obscure when I wrote about him, with strong encouragement from my advisor Sidney Morgenbesser and other members of my doctoral committee, and he remains dormant today”.

From this statement, we could assume that the topic of Dr. X’s dissertation was and still is obscure and esoteric, and perhaps motivating just for a small group of dedicated students who, as we all know from our experiences, would be encouraged to research further. From the Course statistics in Professor X’s CV, I found that over 17 years, at least 26 students had been encouraged to further study relevant topics. At the same time, those students in turn motivate their teachers to be even more dedicated, and continue their own lifelong learning with them, as well as promote philosophical methods and ways of thinking beyond academia into the public space.

At twenty-five years old, X, feeling nostalgic for their life outside academia, turned down an offer to stay on as an assistant professor at the Barnard Philosophy Department

following the completion of their PhD in Philosophy. They thought that they were done with academia. They were absent for twenty years. None of their work-related undertakings, which included freelance writing and stock investments, were successful. Struggling with an unstable social life in their mid-forties, they sought solace in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*. They found renewed inspiration in the prospect of rediscovering skills from their youth. This renewed vigor drove them back to the field of philosophy. Such a non-linear life story could be partly explained by the short background evaluation of the score of professional prestige during the 1970s in the USA, USSR (Treiman, 1977), and Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY).

The most prestigious professions in the USA during the relevant period were predominantly and closely connected with politics (with a score of about 90).

The USSR's top score was reserved for the scientific professions related to medicine (about 80); in the SFRY, the highest score was held by mechanical engineers (about 70).

The economic professions had an average score of about 60 in all three societies. In the USA and SFRY it was 56 and 57 respectively, and in the USSR about 67.

The significant difference is that top-rated professions in the USA also possessed (political) power. In contrast, the economics professions, which were dominant in the SFRY political structure, had the lowest prestige score. The situation was similar in the USSR, where following this logic, knowledge did not involve (political) power, and politics did not entail adequate knowledge.

Nowadays, professional trends in the US can be partly inferred from the official educational statistics. Throughout the 2019/2020 academic year, the number of Bachelor's degrees conferred in the domains of business, management, and marketing was estimated to be around 390,000. In comparison, philosophy with religious studies had a considerably lower figure, with roughly 11,000 Bachelor's degrees awarded (NCES, 2020), while philosophy accounts for about 3% and religious studies about 2% of total Humanities bachelor's degrees over three decades (1987-2018) (AMACAD, 2018).

The global trend is to study and obtain an academic degree in the field of economics; more accurately, the top scores among students are reserved for business-related professions. So, the general conclusion of these 50 years of prestige inversion may be that *power* is still the primary motive for studying, yet the focus is split between politics and business, media and management.

This brief background tells us that, both back then and now, undergraduate students have hardly been motivated to study philosophy in great numbers. That also means that choosing philosophy courses today is partly motivated by the calculus of chasing a degree.

It should be noted that over the 50 years (1970/71-2020/21) the number of students in Philosophy and Religious Studies increased by 27.5 percent, while the number of students in Business and related studies increased by 70 percent in the same period (NCES, 2020).

Nevertheless, this fact shows that the professions of professors and researchers in different fields of science should be compared relative to other, more qualitative indicators than just the numbers of BA, MA, and Ph.D. students per year (NCES, 2022).

Moreover, being a professor and in such a context, where students are very well aware of the professional prestige trends on one hand, and serving as a teacher to a disengaged group of students, many of whom struggle to grasp the dense, antiquated, and frequently translated texts of philosophy (Bradner & Mills, 2018), on the other hand, is just one of the facts which should be acknowledged, rather than neglected by professors and researchers in the field of the social sciences and humanities.

### **Responding to the expectations of teaching in various educational settings: Teaching at three different universities 1990-2023**

After taking a pause of twenty years from academia, Professor X got employed at the University of Albany (SUNY, Albany) where they taught eleven courses from 1990 to 2001: *Morals and Society*; *Understanding Science*; *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*; *Existentialist Values*; *Existentialist Philosophies*; *Philosophy of Art*; *World Views*; *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Philosophy*; *History of Political Philosophy*; *Philosophy and Race*; *World Religions*.

From 2001 to 2019, Professor X taught more than 15 courses at the University of Oregon, which I divided for further analysis into smaller groups (Tables 1 and 2) comparable with the courses they taught at the other two universities, as well as with Dr. X’s published studies analyzed in the next two sections.

Table 1

*Numbers of taught courses and student enrollment per year at the University of Oregon (2001-2017/18).*

Year	Number of courses per year	Students enrolled in courses
2001	7	367
2002	8	335
2003	6	56
2004	6	85
2005	6	309
2006	6	317
2007	2	38
2008	7	361
2009	5	340
2010	6	342
2011	5	88
2012	6	56
2013	7	119
2014	6	63
2015	7	123
2016	7	147
2017/18	6	175
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>3321</b>



In the fall of 2019, Professor X joined the Philosophy Department at Lehman College, CUNY, where they taught ten philosophy courses: Introduction to Moral Theory, Race and Ethnicity, Problems of Philosophy, Early Modern (Modern II), Ethics and Race, Disaster and Corona, Democracy, Philosophy, and Atheism, and had an affiliation with the CUNY Graduate Center Department of Philosophy, where they taught a course on Philosophy of Race.

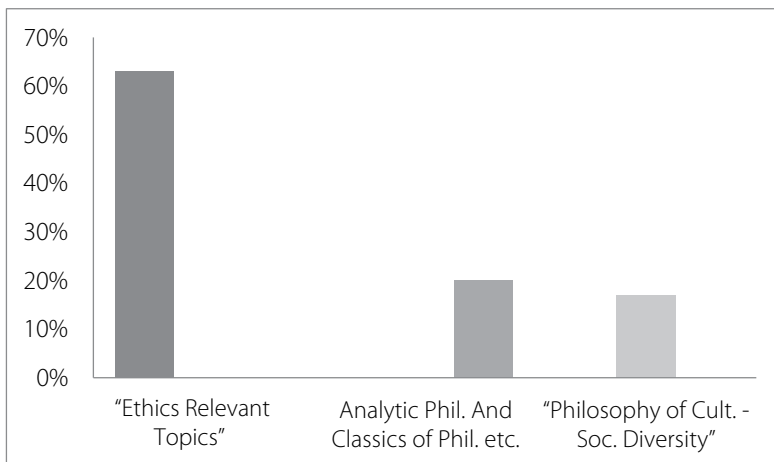
Table 2

*Frequency and continuity of studying philosophy courses at the UO from 2001-2017/18.*

Grouped courses	Enrolled students	Percent of total	Time intervals (Continuity/Discontinuity)
Ethics and Moral Theory	<b>1839</b>	<b>“Ethics Relevant Topics”</b> <b>63%</b>	2001-02 / 2005-06 / 2008-09
Phil. of Disasters	<b>67</b>		2006-07 / 2012-14
Philosophy & Cultural Diversity/ Feminism /Home and Homelessness	<b>378</b>	<b>“Philosophy of Cultural and Social Diversity”</b> <b>17%</b>	2015 / 16 / 17
Philosophy of Race and Black Resistance/ Afro-American Philosophy	<b>118</b>		2001-2017
Analyt. Philosophy And Classics of Philosophy + Hist. and Introduction of Philosophy	<b>919</b>	<b>20%</b>	2001-2017
<b>Total</b>	<b>3321</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2C / 3D</b>

Figure 2

*Graphical representation of the chosen philosophy courses by students at the UO from 2001-2017/18 taught by Professor X.*



Comparing the teaching activities at the University of Albany (SUNY), University of Oregon (UO), and the City University of New York (CUNY), it is indicated that in all three periods, introductory philosophical courses were taught, such as Ethics, Moral Theory, Philosophy of Cultural Diversity, History and Introduction to Philosophy and other Classical Philosophical Topics, such as Hume, Descartes, Locke, etc. Since returning to academia, Professor X has been persistent in their teaching methodology and style, i.e., teaching from scratch in an expert and formal manner. However, there were also innovative courses such as Philosophy of Race, Feminist Philosophy, Home and Homelessness, and Philosophy of Disasters.

Considering the representative period of 2001-2018, according to the first two tables and Figure 1, the most attended courses were related to ethics and introductory-level philosophy (about 80%). The courses addressing current and topical social concerns, e.g., disasters, gender issues, or homelessness, were attended by about 20 percent of all students in the relevant period, bearing in mind that these were generally taught during a much shorter period (e.g., two years), or in discontinuity (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

Considering the publishing and research activities of Professor X, which will be discussed in the next section, it may be assumed that the relevant enrollment rates of specific courses that were made available for limited periods of time (Ethics/Disasters/Philosophy of Social and Cultural Diversity) may have been attributed to Professor X’s teaching approach (practicing philosophy), publications, and skills, as well as a significant social focus on that topic at the time.

Considering that the average number of first year students of philosophy per department is about 90 (Hotcourses Abroad, 2024; Hotcourses Abroad, 2024a; NCES, 2018) and the enrollment rates of the courses on general philosophical topics in Professor X’s case (average 190 per year) illustrate (Table 1 and 2; Figure 2) the relevance of Professor X’s methodology and research approach, defined as teaching and doing philosophy from basics. The same trend is also noticeable in postgraduate studies (Table 3).

Table 3  
*Postgraduate study advisement by Professor X 1992-2020*

University	Postgraduate activities			Total
	MA	PhD	PhD committees	
Albany	4	3	0	7
Oregon	3	24	19	46
CUNY	0	5	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>58</b>

A look at Table 3 regarding the frequency of postgraduate study advisement by Dr. X shows that 58 defended MA theses and doctoral dissertations in twenty-eight years, where Professor X was the principal advisor or a member of the thesis committee.

From 2020 to 2023 in the US educational system, about 3 percent of doctoral dissertations in the field of philosophy were under the advisory of Professor X — some of those PhD candidates have built respectable intellectual careers and represent philosophy as an applied and critical discipline. This illustrates a possible response to the introductory issues and expectations that teaching and doing philosophy face. Over the course of the 2019-2020 academic year, 413 Ph.D. dissertations in philosophy were submitted in the USA, and among these, eleven were developed under the supervision of Professor X (NCES, 2020, Lutolof, 2020). It should be said that we opted not to include dissertations from the border years, particularly 2017/18, which would have seen an even more significant percentage of Dr. X's Ph.D. students in relation to the total philosophy Ph.D. population across the United States over this three-year period.

Such results could represent the bellwether regarding the further strengthening of philosophy as an academic discipline and the enhancement of its institutional and educational development.

Moreover, a detailed look at the topics of these theses and dissertations reveals that they are mainly from the field of fundamental philosophical issues. This proves the relevance of Professor X's teaching philosophy from scratch, which is defined not just as learning basic theoretical knowledge but also learning to apply it. However, Professor X's participation in PhD committees in various fields (Sociology, Education, History, Business, etc.) corresponds with their research topic choices, scientific interests, and the range of relevant publications analyzed in the next section.

### **Analysis of Professor X's publications 1990-2023**

The philosophical approach seen in the previous section of the paper is relevant to the current world and has spurred Dr. X's research since 1990. It is evident that Professor X also continues to rely on the analytical skills and historical background they developed during their graduate studies at Columbia University. X practices these skills through the concept of teaching philosophy from scratch, which, according to Professor X, enhances students' resilience in professional and quotidian life during normal times and crises.

Considering the methodology used in this examination, I have grouped research fields and specific types of publications in Table 4.

The research and scientific fields have been synthesized based on the topics, and correlate with the issues present in the teaching activities of Professor X.

The presented articles, books, chapters, and anthologies, which Dr. X has written or contributed to over the years, are relevant not just for their scientific work but also in creating adequate syllabi for various courses at universities in the US and internationally. Together with the main trends and directions in the research work (Table 4) this trend is one part of teaching philosophy from scratch. However, another part of this approach, i.e., doing philosophy, is represented by particular research projects motivated by significant social events that intersect with our lives and professional works.

**Table 4***Publications by Professor X 1990-2023.*

Research / Scientific Fields	Monogr./ Books	Anthol.	Chap. in Book	Articles	Book reviews	Enycl. entries	Web design and prod.	Public and Broad- casts /(Inter) Nat. Media	School Interv.	Miscell- aneous Publ.	Present / lectures	Total per Res. field
Types of Publication/units												
Philosophy of Race (1990-2023)	9	5	12	17	19	3	-	5	2	3	64	139
Philosophy of Women's Study/ Feminist Study (1990-23)	2	-	4	4	4	2	-	-	-	2	19	37
Philosophy and Ethics in Disasters/ Disaster Study (2006-2023)	3	-	3	5	1	2	-	2	-	4	25	45
Political /Social Philosophy and Philosophy of Injustice (1970/1990-2023)	7	-	2	7	7	3	2	-	1	5	30	64
<b>Total per Unit</b>	21	5	21	33	31	10	2	7	3	14	138	<b>285</b>

The quantitative review of Dr. X's publications indicates a prevalence of books, monographs, and anthologies, especially books concerning philosophy of race, political philosophy, and social injustice (about 80%). In addition, there is a significant quantity of book reviews on the relevant topics (84%). The decline of this trend in favor of topics related to disasters and feminism has been evident in the domain of articles, interviews, presentations, and lectures (70% to 18% and 12% respectively), intended for broader public and scientific interests in relatively intensive periods (2006-12, 2020-23), or in discontinuity, which correlated with certain emergencies or disturbing social events (Hurricane Katrina, Haiti Earthquake, COVID-19, climate changes, racial killings and homelessness), covering some of the essential topics in disasters, e.g., preparedness, scarce resources, response, ethical approaches in saving lives, etc. The same public interests have been reflected in media and other broadcasting reports (the issues of race and disasters).

The encyclopedic entries in all four research fields have been scientifically recognized and distributed evenly, which indicates constant and dedicated work on all the mentioned topics during the analyzed period.

Observed from the point of view of the field of research, attention is drawn to the number of publications on disasters, which appeared over a relatively short period, that is, in two dominant intervals, 2006-2012 and then, ten years later, with a book about COVID-19 and the political crisis in America, and the second edition of a book related to ethics for disasters in 2023 (first edition 2009).

A detailed qualitative analysis of Professor X's publications would show that many of these fields overlap, revealing a network of social regularities and often injustices, which Dr. X considers as motives for social change. For example, when it comes to the area of social injustice, there have been volume-length studies on race relations in the US, as well as studies and research on other forms of discrimination, such as discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, space, age, etc. Such an epistemological and methodological scheme is visible and well combined in other research fields, e.g., disaster studies and the relation between vulnerability and some of the social and economic features of a group.

## **Qualitative assessment of the selected research fields**

### **Professor X's educational philosophy of adults as "Teaching philosophy from scratch"**

Considering the purpose and length of this paper, I will limit my assessment mainly to Dr. X's work in most recent papers related to the teaching of philosophy, reviewing some of the relevant issues in different publications.

Considering previously elaborated issues, exploring the teaching of philosophy from scratch could be seen as a blend of students' motivations and Professor X's distinct teaching style at Lehman College, City University of New York (CUNY). In the subsequent brief depiction of this technique, I intend to describe and then investigate whether these statements possess educational, philosophical, and sociological implications.

From a sociological perspective, Professor X used this approach with students who were already adults, mainly with jobs, and socially and economically independent but with the responsibility of supporting their families' social and economic existence and status. Most of them were immigrants who were introduced to college education for the first time. Thus, the educational channel of social mobility, as the main channel of vertical social mobility, is practically the entry into the American dream for immigrant students. The utility of learning philosophy in a systematic way, i.e., syllabi, can enhance the opportunities of applying accepted knowledge to different tasks in their professional and personal lives.

From the educational and philosophical perspective, the teaching is generally based on the assigned texts and theoretical basis in a different philosophical field. According to the author, students mainly focus on their grades without extra academic motives and practice. They mainly stretch their writing assignments and activities to the end of the semester. However, the syllabi require weekly assignments with citations, which prevents the previous instrumentalization of the learning process.

Comparing the students-professor relationship at two universities (Oregon and CUNY), Professor X emphasizes a more relaxed approach to the educational process by students who are not immigrants, and those who are at a younger life stage, from those who are adults, who have jobs, and who have existential and social obligations to their families. For example, in the first case, students called X by their name, the opposite of adult students who addressed them with their title, i.e., Professor X.

Considering the previous description, teaching philosophy or teaching from scratch has an educational function and an important social role (Weiler Gur Arye, 2022). In other words, teaching philosophy from scratch sociologically means enabling someone with expert knowledge to utilize their philosophical education to climb the social ladder. However, the following analysis will also show the feedback effect of sociological factors on teaching philosophy in the classroom and reveal a rich network of intertwined educational philosophies and styles.

### **Professor X’s Self-reflection on philosophy**

In this section I examine the dynamic interplay between philosophy as a field of study and as a profession, particularly in relation to Professor X. Their teaching philosophy is evident in various institutional and social settings, as indicated by previous analyses of this relationship. An examination of syllabi from different courses and relevant publications suggests that they have developed their teaching approach in response not just to faculties’ expectations, but also to social requests and student expectations during critical events and times.

To provide context for Professor X’s responses to the teaching challenges they face, it is important to first explore how X reflects on their own different encounters with philosophy. Then it is important to understand the specific demographics of their students and the resources available at different universities. During high school, they were introduced to philosophy when a social studies teacher assigned X to write a report on the concept of the “golden mean” from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Even though they had an intuitive grasp of the concept at the time, it took some time for X to understand the operational significance of the concept. Professor X utilized concepts of racism and disasters in their publications and teaching, juxtaposing them with opposing ideas such as justice and normalcy.

The second encounter with philosophy was primarily discussed in the part focusing on Professor X’s social and professional history. It mainly encompasses their time studying at Columbia and the challenges they faced in selecting their PhD topic, ultimately rejecting the offer to teach at the Philosophy Department. Following a concise review of their unstable business career, they ultimately opted to return to philosophy after a twenty-year break.

The third encounter was partly described in the previous section. I analyzed their experiences with philosophy at three different universities using objective, quantitative measures. Taking teaching seriously is a priority for management at all three universities. Professor X agreed and elaborated that this is correct as they are compensated for their teaching responsibilities. Nonetheless, the dominant ideological currents at the university or department might impact teaching approaches or styles producing some instability (Smith, 2022). Professor X’s academic role at SUNY, Albany was described as unconventional within a traditional department, whereas at Oregon University, X was the gatekeeper of the traditional philosophical canon. In the beginning, X produced papers on mixed race (Zack, 1992; Zack, 1996) and the Lockean concept of ownership (Zack, 1992a). They

delivered foundational philosophical courses at all three universities, initiating teaching on novel subjects while employed at Oregon University and Lehman College (CUNY) (see previous sections).

They identified five challenges in teaching from scratch while working at CUNY. Since returning to academia in 1990, X has noticed a steady decline in students' preparedness to read, including the syllabus. X's teaching at Lehman College highlighted certain issues concerning the demographics of the majority of the student population. In the beginning, a majority of students have a negative attitude towards reading, especially when dealing with syllabi. The primary task for all courses is the evaluation of crucial components of the syllabus, and additional tasks will not be accepted until that is accomplished. Numerous students have an antipathy towards writing, a vital component of philosophy. X stresses that English is not the first language for most of them, and Professor X frequently focuses on what they write rather than how they write (Atkinson, 2014; Atkinson et al., 2007; Zack, 2021). Most people prefer not to speak or display their knowledge, but they all desire to obtain a college degree. X emphasized their role as an educator because X has control over the grades in specific classes. While the student may not be fully prepared for college, they make a concerted effort to navigate the bureaucratic and electronic complexities, indicating a strong motivation to pursue their studies. Nonetheless, it is clear that X identifies more with the role of an educator than an administrator. Most students rely on the teacher but are still highly independent, making it difficult for the teacher to dictate their actions. As previously indicated, they are adults with families, jobs, and other responsibilities that might influence their academic obligations. Professor X argues that they are highly professional and willing to abide by the rules (Zack, 2021). They accept even that making exceptions for them would be unfair to others in similar situations who do not request it. Also, their interaction with the teacher is typically more professional in comparison to the younger students at the previous universities.

Professor X highlights a dual future for teaching philosophy, as this paper examines the fundamental aspects of its epistemology. The concept of duality encompasses both inclusive pedagogy and scholarly attention, similarly to the comparison between inclusive pedagogy, inclusive democracy, and individual well-being.

Concrete examples of Professor X's teaching philosophy will be examined through further critical analysis of relevant studies in the following section.

## **Moral theory and Social justice in Applied Ethics for Disasters**

This analysis will reveal the fundamental principles of Professor X's teaching philosophy. Specifically, they utilize fundamental philosophical principles in novel courses and research. Professor X expects the students to employ the same reasoning in reaching their social and professional goals. Professor X has published a second edition of the major study in disaster ethics. Disasters have been accepted as mere risks in normal life (Zack, 2023). COVID-19 is used as a prime example. The virus is still present and will live with us, but it is no longer a matter of urgency, except for those infected. It may be argued that catching a virus as an everyday risk is different from natural hazards, e.g., wildfires,

avalanches, coastal flooding, cold waves, drought, earthquakes, hail, heat waves, hurricanes (tropical cyclones), ice storms, landslides, lightning, riverine flooding, strong winds, tornadoes, typhoons, tsunamis, volcanic activities, extreme winter weather. However, this narrative does not weigh the various risks we live with, but it instead refers to the new (global) sentiment regarding disasters. The first part of the book mainly focuses on ethical issues or approaches to preserving lives from natural disasters. Professor X is categorical in concluding that instead of saving the greatest number, we must be oriented towards preparedness and the response of saving all who can be saved. From an everyday perspective, when we think about natural disasters, we often consider certain risks. However, juxtaposing the risks we are living in and the fact that not all disasters are unpredictable develops one possible way of enhancing our resilience. The latent issue that this second edition of the book opens is that of the consequences of this narrative of disasters as yet another risk that we need to live with. Would such narratives in global media and everyday speech develop defeatism, apathy, and resignation instead of timely preparation for daily life? Such issues put more pressure on solidarity, deontology, and general scientific evidence, which help us predict, resist, survive, and live with some of the risks, with the best chance of survival for all those who could survive.

The second major example provided in the new section of the book is climate change. But why would Professor X use the example of climate change which, from the point of view of daily living, may appear to be an invisible social and natural hazard?

From reading this part, I comprehend climate change to be a meta-disaster. Such a disaster is slow but progressive. As such, these disasters tend to hit the entire planet, bringing a wide range of sudden natural hazards and social conflicts. In such a situation, the crucial factors are time, as a common issue, and the potential of anticipation, which is often the issue of an individual or a narrower group. Anticipation requires a perspective for creating a future action, plus a retrospective of the already completed action. Such potential simultaneously consists of a plan and a motive for action to survive and thrive. This is an inner feature of Resilience (Mitrović, 2015). However, denial of climate change, deconstructing or erasing a retrospective of it, i.e., treating climate changes (past and future) as too far, unique, and unrepeatable events.

In this short assessment of this study, I would not completely agree with the *conclusion* that "The preceding chapters do not admit any conclusion in the sense that anything has been 'proven'" (Zack, 2023).

In *stricto sensu* of scientific discovery, that may be true. However, plenty of "discoveries" and "proofs" are scattered through different parts of the book and related to various disaster issues. Here are two disaster examples that "prove" Dr. X's proposition to save all who can be saved with the best preparations. There is no difference between intentional consequentialist flooding of one region of the country in order to preserve two or more regions, and transforming all hospitals into COVID-19 clinics during the recent pandemic. The principle of saving the greatest number is applied. When compared, climate change denials and the general wish for normalization of life during the COVID-19 pandemic appear to be different sides of the same coin. Both the denial and the general wish imply status quo, or social apathy. That means, in practice, slimmer chances of survival for those



who are discriminated against, regardless of whether they are less resilient due to racial, geographical, climate, or social background. Both examples exposed a lack of preparation, decreased resilience of the most vulnerable, and indicate which ethics we should apply (with case-by-case fine-tuning) in future disasters.

In the book about the political crisis in the USA during the COVID-19 pandemic, Professor X (Zack, 2021) reveals that some disasters, in this case, the pandemic, become a matter of crisis management and not management based on adequate preparations, that the shortages of daily living led to some long-term crises exploding, which all in all calls into question the legitimacy of the system and confirms that disaster management in such situations does not depend very much on governments, but on experts, in this case, medical personnel, public health professionals, but also volunteers, ready to help in saving lives.

In addition, this study pointed out the dangers for the most vulnerable groups and individuals in such situations. The forms of discrimination (ageism, racism, nationalism, aversion and ignorance of homelessness, etc.) were proxies in saving some lives at the expense of others. The political crisis during the pandemic evoked or exposed various forms of racism and discrimination.

All those relevant issues were partly starting to be developed in a series of very important articles and chapters in anthologies that have provided an analysis of disaster management ranging from local (US) surroundings to cross-cultural and cross-national perspectives. Here are some examples: discussing an existential difference between human security and homeland security, from the perspective of moral theory and social contract theory. Those essential issues are related to organizational and ethical problems in disasters. The differences and crucial similarities between vulnerable groups are discussed in the context of cross-national, political, and cultural responses in various disasters (New Orleans, Haiti, and Chile) (Zack, 2012), and further the global issues of disaster planning, and preparations vs response are discussed. A sociological and philosophical analysis of altruism and apathy as endpoints on the axis of social action in saving lives among the most vulnerable groups in today's society is published in one co-authored chapter. Even more, this study addresses the issue of slow disasters, which do not differ from sudden ones in their effects and consequences (Mitrović & Zack, 2018).

All those studies led to the creation of the recent narrative of "Disasters as a Risk World," which, with the concluding "Code for Ethics for Disasters," enabled all responsible social and political actors, researchers, and students around the world to construct a methodology for setting adequate managing tools and studying future disasters, be they slow or sudden, local or global.

### **Discussion of Professor X's educational style and philosophical research interests**

The academic career of Professor X has lasted for thirty-four years, not counting X's graduate and PhD studies at Columbia University. In this period (since 1990), they have taught the main philosophical courses and disciplines, ethics, moral theory, and the philosophy of Hobbes, Locke, and Descartes, but also those which are part of an innovative

and applied philosophy, such as philosophy of disasters and philosophy of race. Professor X (e.g., 1993, 2002, 2005, 2011; 2015) has been among the most relevant philosophers who have discussed concepts such as “mixed race” through a series of philosophical articles and books. From 1993 until 2015, Professor X made a significant impact on philosophy and the social sciences by combining and applying the concepts of social contract, social justice, and moral theory in the philosophy of race, the philosophy of women’s studies, and the philosophy of disasters.

The previous section on Professor X’s teaching activities and publications showcases X’s teaching and philosophy responses to all presented issues at the micro and macro levels at the beginning of this study. First, faculties’ expectations about balancing research and teaching are presented through 285 publications, while several more are in the process of publication. A large number of them are books (21), anthologies or chapters (26), and articles (33) with high-impact factors whose research focus corresponds with the topic of courses.

Second, the professor’s expectations from students. In one representative period of about 15 years, Professor X taught courses for 3,321 students with an average of six courses per year. That is 190 students per year, double the number of the national average in philosophy studies.

Professor X was an advisor or member of a PhD committee for 58 MA theses and doctoral dissertations (1992–2020). During the last few years, Dr. X’s students have authored and defended a considerable number of philosophy doctorates in the US on relevant topics.

This paper explores the social and educational context as well as personal teaching styles in sections three and four. Educational philosophy is essential for the educational philosophy and duality of philosophical teaching (studying and doing philosophy). Syllabi in different fields are informed by scholarly research and commonly have a philosophical, theoretical, and empirical underpinning.

The sections on Professor X’s social and educational background and on their teaching of philosophy and research activities illustrate the contrasting social and professional progress of Professor X and their students. X decided to leave academia after successfully completing their studies and defending their PhD thesis at Columbia University, and ventured into a business opportunity that was not as successful. X thought that engaging in philosophy was a misconception, which led them to decline a job in academia and ultimately relinquish philosophy as both a career and a tool. By drawing on philosophical concepts found in course materials, X steers their students towards achieving higher social status through their teaching methods. However there are also sociological issues which have supported X’s personal teaching philosophy. Professor X’s explanation for switching their major from psychology to philosophy during their senior year of studies lies in the following reasons. The change was influenced by the philosophy course’s focus on active teaching methods and the psychology course’s emphasis on passive teaching methods. It could be concluded that the low academic performance of students can be attributed to various factors, but ultimately, the reason lies in the teaching approaches. With outdated and ineffective teaching methods, students may struggle to grasp complex

concepts and fail to reach their full potential. Therefore, it is crucial for educators to continuously evaluate and adapt their teaching approaches to ensure the success of their students and their expectations. The ethical guidelines established in Professor X's disaster studies suggested applying a uniform approach to all students when it came to meeting their course requirements and completing assignments. Even more, the students accepted this rule as a channel of social solidarity and academic communication with Professor X.

The comparison of quantitative and qualitative analyses of Professor X's research works and syllabi is essential for assessing the harmony between teaching domains and the research priorities of teachers' philosophies. Ethics and foundational philosophy are the main themes of the courses that have the highest number of students (about 60%), and they are followed by works on race philosophy, politics, philosophy and feminism (about 40%). During a brief time frame, courses focusing on contemporary social issues such as disasters, gender, social injustice and homelessness were taken by approximately 40 percent of students and were followed with the same percent of publication on the same topic. Following institutional expectations, suitable and balanced research projects and dissemination accompany the educational emphasis. Specifically, X's lectures and articles mainly focus on the last-mentioned topics, taking into account two crucial monographs about disasters discussed in the subsection on applied ethics in disaster and crisis management. In greater detail, the last subsection additionally discusses the continuity of X's recent publications and courses that have been offered sporadically over the last thirty years. I endeavor to encompass all relevant factors essential for comprehending individual educational approaches in courses that are offered either continuously or discontinuously (Table 5).

Table 5  
*Teaching philosophy styles in different settings: self and student perspectives*

Teaching styles	Teaching at various Universities								
	SUNY			OU			CUNY		
	BA	MA	PhD	BA	MA	PhD	BA	MA	PhD
Expert	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Formal							x	x	x
Personal				x					
Delegator	X								
Facilitator	X								

Note. + self perspective; x student's perspective

Besides this educational and philosophical comparison, honors and awards are sociological markers and acknowledgment of someone's individual achievements and endurance during their career. This indicator also assists in recognizing specific teaching methods as expert and formal. Professor X has received about 30 awards at different Universities (Lehman College, CUNY, Oregon, Albany, Columbia). Some of them are Pacific

Division, American Philosophical Association, 2021, John Dewey Lecture, Phi Beta Kappa-Romanell Professorship, 2019-20, United Academics, University of Oregon, Strong Voice Award, April 2019, Martin Luther King Award, University of Oregon, January 2016, United University Professions Nuala McGann Drescher Affirmative Action Leave Award, 1994-5, General Education teaching award, 1994, Woodrow Wilson College Teachers' Dissertation Fellowship, 1969-70, and Phi Beta Kappa, New York University, 1966.

In addition to the achievements that earned them these awards, there have been more than ten memberships and a large number of external reviewers' roles in highly esteemed editions and publications, various promotions, and invited international and national plenary talks on disaster justice, human security and vulnerability in Copenhagen, Tokyo Paris, Oxford, Monterey, Oregon, Belgrade, etc. Part of my personal research observation of Professor X's career as a philosopher is that they have been no less curious about all relevant and often very hot social topics. Professor X remains a highly creative, imaginative, and exciting interlocutor who inspires colleagues and students.

My detailed research into Dr. X's academic activities, which has been based on objective biographical and professional indicators, indicates that Dr. X has worked in a balanced way during their career teaching philosophy from scratch. However, in discontinuity and in accordance with actual social events, they have used classical and basic philosophical works to broaden relevant social and ethical issues such as vulnerabilities and injustice in disasters and crises, which has been part of this balanced approach as a practicing philosophy outside and inside academia. This moral and social vigilance is applied in teaching philosophy from scratch. It finally equips students with academic and life skills for ethics, adaptability, and thriving in their professional and quotidian lives.

## Conclusion

Teaching isn't an isolated endeavor. It's enriched and informed by research and publishing. This link enhances the quality and depth of education. The expanded definition of teaching philosophy emphasizes educators' multifaceted role. Effective teaching combines classroom instruction, research writing, and public engagement, which fulfills most social and educational issues, whether they are part of the micro or macro levels of institutional, systemic, or student expectations. Delving into the specific research-teaching connection provides a nuanced understanding. Educators can integrate their reflections on their education and research into their pedagogical methods. This benefits pupils and the wider academic community. Although this study is just one step to understanding these key concepts, it allows educators and policymakers to appreciate the comprehensive nature of teaching philosophy. It encourages a more holistic approach to teaching, one that values integrating research and public engagement with customary educational practices.

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Article received: 22.10.2024.

Updated version received: 26.12.2024.

Accepted for publishing: 26.12.2024.

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## Šta u stvari znači „Nastavna filozofija“? Studija slučaja: nastav(n)e filozofije Profesora Iks

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### **Apstrakt**

*U visokom obrazovanju, nastavna filozofija predstavlja ključni alat za sprovođenje i procenu kvaliteta nastave. Ipak, postoji ograničen fokus na istraživanje njene suštine. Nastavna filozofija može se tumačiti kao strategija u obrazovanju i pedagogiji koja prikazuje kako se nastavnici suočavaju sa procesom nastave, obuhvatajući i pedagoške i obrazovne aspekte. Drugačiji pogled na nastavnu filozofiju uključuje direktno prenošenje filozofskog znanja sa nastavnika na studente. Kvalitativna studija u visokom obrazovanju istražuje se analizom socijalnog i obrazovnog porekla profesora X (Iks), predavanja u različitim okruženjima, metodologije profesora u podučavanju filozofije od osnova, kao i šireg akademskog rada profesora, koji uključuje pisanje, istraživanje i javne prezentacije. Istraživanje ispituje nastavnikovu samorefleksiju o filozofiji i razvoj „nastavne filozofije od nule“, istražujući kako ona podržava nastavnike u proširenju filozofije izvan uobičajenih akademskih okruženja i specifične nastavne filozofije. Nalazi ukazuju na postojanje veze između nastavnih metoda i istraživačko-publikacionih aktivnosti. Rezultati prevazilaze tipične asocijacije kako bi se istražila suština veze između istraživanja i nastave. Ovo zapažanje produbljuje naše razumevanje značenja „nastavne filozofije“ kao raznovrsnog procesa koji uključuje nastavu, pisanje, akademske aktivnosti i javne doprinose.*

**Ključne reči:** nastavna filozofija, visoko obrazovanje, pedagogija, studenti, obrazovni i istraživački stil.