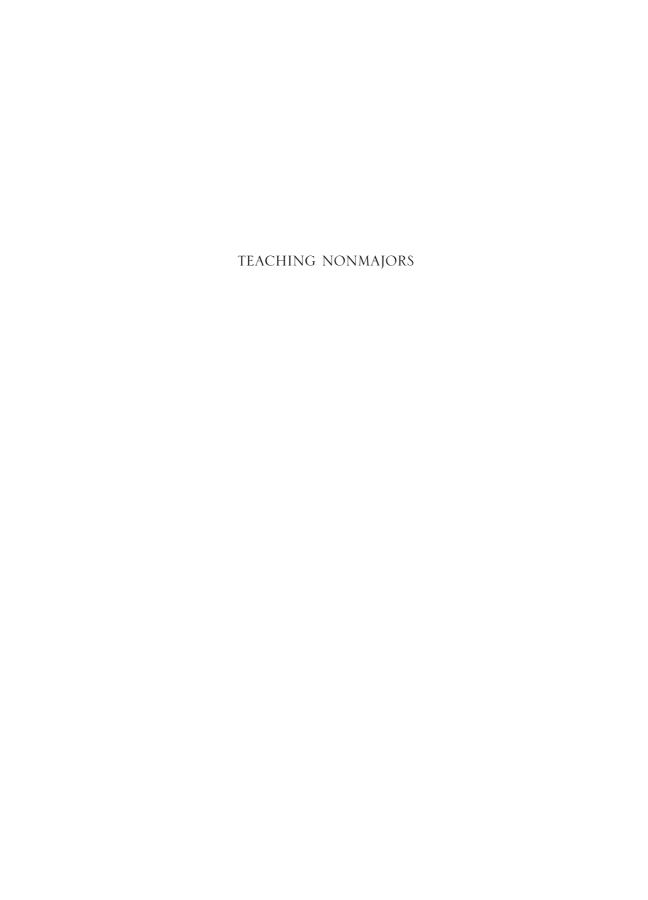


Advice for Liberal Arts Professors

P. Sven Arvidson



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P. Sven Arvidson

TEACHING NONMAJORS

Advice for Liberal Arts Professors

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to Dr. Henry Rosemont Jr., teacher and friend

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Contents

Preface	x
CHAPTER ONE	
Give Better Lectures	1
Do What You Naturally Do Best—Passion Wins	
Do the Unexpected	
Know Your Stuff	
Care for Question and Answer	
Avoid Lecture Traps	
Exploit Analogies and Diagrams	
Give Students the Notes	
The Challenge of PowerPoint	
Briefly Debrief Yourself	
CHAPTER TWO	
Break Up Lectures	17
Use Relevant Class Discussion	
Props	
Songs	
In-Class Reading and Writing	
Visual Artwork	
Films (Not Movies!)	
Personal Experience	
Comfort Breaks	

VIII

CHAPTER THREE The Best Discussions and Student Presentations	29
Arranging a Discussion	
Discussion Goals	
Discussion Structures	
Debriefing	
Student Presentations	
CHAPTER FOUR	
The Art of Assignments	45
Assign Readings Smartly	
Get Students to Read	
Exams	
Papers	
Grading	
Distinction and Continuity in Assignments	
CHAPTER FIVE	
Sensible Policies	61
Think Deeply about a Good Syllabus	
Attendance and Lateness	
Communication	
Plagiarism	
CHAPTER SIX	
Professor and Student Problems	73
Teaching Disinterested Students	
The Aggressive Passive-Aggressive Student	
The Interrupter	
The Hijacker	
The Painfully Shy Student	
Special Needs Students Are Not Problem Students	
CHAPTER SEVEN	
Understand and Improve Student Ratings	85
Read and Understand the Form	
Each Student Is a Voter	
Interact with Student Ratings Criteria in Mind	

CONTENTS	IX
Administer Student Ratings Appropriately	
Use a Secondary Form	
Ego Fluctuation, Knowing the Standard, and Online Ratings	
CHAPTER EIGHT	
Conclusion	95
Index	97

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Preface

Perhaps I had visited the *Twilight Zone* of academia, but it was just an upper-level nursing class. The students dutifully took notes, arrived promptly and returned promptly from the break, and attended sharply to the intricate PowerPoint presentation and lecture. All of this could happen on a good day in one of my classes. What unsettled me was the students' appearance and demeanor. In a classroom of forty-five students, not one of them slouched in his or her seat for two hours. There were no torn or patched jeans. There were no caps or hooded sweatshirts pulled down to hide a face. No students sat alone. No pink hair, no green hair, no wild hair. All students had brought their course materials to class!

It took me awhile to come to grips with how this other world compares to my world. In that other world, the teachers are professional role models for students. The teacher is a nurse, the students are to be nurses. My students are not looking to be professors, much less philosophers. In that other world, all the teachers know all the students in the program, as in a big family. In a building built especially for their major, these students and professors see each other in the hallways, in classes, in gathering rooms, at regular functions over the span of four years. My students generally do not have the opportunity to take another course of mine—one term and out—and we are unlikely to have another conversation. In that other world, students have to pay attention to the course content because someone's life depends on getting it right. For my students, daydreaming in class is nonfatal. In that other world, students are trained early how to be competent and responsible students and as seniors, how to be professionals in a workplace. My students do not expect such training, nor would they accept it easily.

I primarily teach required "core" philosophy courses to students who are not philosophy majors. I enjoy having nursing majors and all the other majors one finds on a campus in my classes. Yet I envy the institutionalized