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As I reflect on my teaching I realize that there have been four major influences on my teaching philosophy:

1. The first is my experiences as a student. **Which undergraduate and graduate courses helped me learn? Which professors facilitated my learning?** The answer is the courses, which were logically organized with clear objectives, useful examples, and sound assessments. I loved to be in classes where the professors were passionate about the subject -- the ones who made the material come alive! I learned that good professors were experts in their discipline but were also learners. They didn't always know the answers to specific questions but they never discounted students' questions and would come to the next class with an answer, or better yet, another question that pushed the class deeper into the content. I also learned that knowledge changes constantly. That sociology was constantly evolving. I learned methods and theories that I could use to analyze research questions. And most important of all, I learned that I could make a contribution to sociology.
2. The second influence is my own teaching: **Which teaching methods have worked well? What has been the feedback from students in my courses?** I have learned that students appreciate courses that are well designed with clear objectives. They also react positively to the use of examples which demonstrate the method, theory, or model being taught. Students want to be able to relate readings, writing assignments, and other course requirements to the course content. They want to understand how their work helps them meet the course learning objectives. Students also like to learn about the research that I do. They want to know what it's like being a sociologist. I have also learned that there are some simple techniques that can have major impacts on courses. For example, "one minute papers" work very well. This is a technique that was developed at Harvard and described in the Harvard Assessment papers. At the end of a class, the professor asks the students to write the answers to two questions on a sheet of paper: **(1) What was the most important thing you learned in class today? and (2) What question is foremost in your mind as you leave class?** The students do not include their names. Going over the papers before the next class gives me an excellent idea of the progress of the students, how they have interpreted the material, and questions they have. This is so much better than the open question that I used to ask at the end of class - **"Are there any questions?"** The response to this was typically silence and the shuffling of books and backpacks. The written one minute papers have enabled me to monitor and change the content and the approach that I'm taking in the course
3. The third influence on my teaching has been my research. The long-term "Making the

Match Between University Graduates and Corporate Employers in Canada" project focussed on the general skills that university graduates needed to thrive in a workplace that is going through dramatic changes. Drs. James C. Rush, Iris Berdrow and I presented the major findings of this research in [The Bases of Competence: Skills for Lifelong Learning and Employability](#). This book was published in 1998 by Jossey-Bass. The importance of skill development as an aspect of higher education became very clear to us as we conducted this research. I have continued to investigate this area and have looked at applications of competency-based education. Understanding the importance of integrating skill development into the delivery of course content, I have added and modified my teaching approach and students assignments in my courses. The most direct application is in SOAN 432, Transition from School to Work, the capstone course for majors in sociology and anthropology. In this course we explore the workplace that the students are about to enter. **How have the changes in organizations impacted the design of work?** The students do an "action project" on a topic that relates to what they want to do after they graduate. They also complete a "skills portfolio" containing self-assessments of the skills in the bases of competence model. I have taught the course four times now and have been able to refine it each year to better meet the needs of our students. Students who take this course find it very useful and they develop more self-confidence about their knowledge and skills. I have learned that reflection is a vital step in education. Experiential opportunities for students such as co-op terms, job shadowing, and practica must include an element of reflection so that students determine what they have learned through the experience. In addition to the Transition course, I have worked with quite a few students in the Peer Helper Program on their practicum projects and have incorporated self-reflection into these courses.

4. The fourth influence on my teaching philosophy comes under the heading of service or practice. From 1993-1995 I was involved in the University of Guelph's Strategic Planning Commission. I chaired Task Force 4, which conducted an "Assessment of Values and Institutional Climate/Culture." I was very impressed with the interest around the concept of a "learner-centred" environment and was very pleased when the University Senate adopted learner-centred as a strategic direction. I believe that we have moved into an era where individuals are required to be self-directed in education and employment. I think that this is a very positive trend. Currently, I am working on a new joint endeavour with Humber College to create a set of programs that combine the theories, philosophies, and methodologies that university programs offer with the applications, specific skills, and specific knowledge that characterize college programs in Ontario. The new Guelph-Humber programs will award a combined degree and diploma. In a sense we are putting the best of both worlds together. This is an exciting opportunity for me and I have been very impressed with the way that learner-centredness and competency-based education are informing each step in the development of these new programs. I have had the opportunity to work with Teaching Support Services on several initiatives, presentations, and workshops. This year I have been assisting the Ontario Veterinarian College with the assessment of the new competency-based program that was launched in Fall 2000. We have used several types of assessments to determine if both content and skills are being learned by the new cohort of students. I've also worked with faculty from the Ontario Agriculture College on their "World of Work" program that builds skill development and

work experiences into the courses. Their students also complete portfolios. Publication of **The Bases of Competence** book and presentations that Iris Berdrow and I have done at conferences have created opportunities for us to explore competency-based education applications outside of our own institutions. I have given presentations to the Board of Governors at McMaster University and the School of Business at Ryerson University.

In summary, my teaching philosophy continues to evolve. I have learned from my experiences as a student and a professor. I have been able to integrate my research interests and findings into my teaching and I have had opportunities to apply my knowledge to courses and programs within the University of Guelph and to programs outside. Learner-centred approaches, competency-based education, and reflection are themes that underpin my teaching (and learning) philosophy.