At the undergraduate level, I have competency and especial interest in teaching ethics, applied ethics, political philosophy, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, and logic. At the graduate level, I can teach ethics, political philosophy and epistemology, with particular focus on skepticism, political legitimacy, global justice, environmental ethics, and intergenerational justice. I have taught two undergraduate courses as sole instructor at NYU: ethics and epistemology. Attached are evaluations and syllabi.

Philosophy is most worthwhile when it’s directly engaged with our deepest human concerns—the Big Questions which immediately grip and perplex us all, whether or not we are (or aspire to be) professional philosophers. Unfortunately, the most capable philosophers are unable to agree on solutions to the Big Questions, and I’ve argued in my research that this fact should prevent us from thinking that studying philosophy will in general be likely to lead people to adopt correct answers to them. Instead, I take the primary benefit of studying philosophy to be the understanding that we obtain when we grasp both the appeal and shortcomings of extant competing solutions to major philosophical problems. And I take as a secondary benefit the skills produced by sustained effort at philosophical study—this includes increased precision and clarity of thought, an ability to consider impartially the perspectives of those who disagree and to appreciate criticism of the things that we take for granted, a facility for finding common ground in a dispute and crafting arguments for one’s views that start from premises that aren’t easily rejected by one’s opponents, and the ability to put all this into compelling prose.

Thus I structure the content of my courses around the central disputes that animate a given philosophical subject, selecting opposing writers who are accessible yet rigorous. And I impose assignments and assessments that are conducive to developing philosophical skill. At an undergraduate level, I require that students post online, in a message board readable by all, thoughts about the reading prior to class. This motivates students to stay engaged with the course material despite the inevitable distractions that arise through the semester. It also gives me a chance to customize lectures to address students’ specific concerns and correct their misunderstandings. I also give more formal writing assignments. For introductory students,
these may be short—half page, or 1-2 pages—and involve only extracting the essential points of a tricky argument (e.g., explaining the Agrippan Trilemma, or the relevance of the paradox of hedonism to the plausibility of psychological egoism). When classes are more advanced, they receive longer, 6-10 page assignments, where they also assess a philosophical position and develop further criticisms or defenses. In the most advanced classes, students find their own writing topics, with my guidance. In all cases I take time to provide detailed comments on students’ work, and some assignments involve rewriting previous work in light of these comments. Finally, most undergraduate classes will include a final exam. I distribute a study guide containing 12-15 essay questions, and I provide multiple review sessions to help students answer the questions. The actual exam is composed of 5-6 questions I select from the study guide. This gives students a chance to review the entire subject matter of the course at once, in a way that minimizes stress.

At the graduate level, I expect students would be self-motivated, and classes should be primarily discussion driven. The tangible course requirement may consist solely of a single term paper that the student submits in the second half of the semester and revises in light of my comments. I may use online message boards for discussions which go beyond the time constraints of our meeting period. And in special cases, students may also benefit from taking turns presenting material in class.

Because of my background, I am familiar with challenges faced by Asian students, including cultural tendencies towards deference which sometimes inhibit speaking up, family expectations which can discourage interest in “impractical” fields like philosophy, and difficulties related to perceptions of being a “model minority”. I am committed to mentoring such students to succeed not only in the university setting, but also in the wider culture.