

Philosophy of Teaching Statement: Dr. François Jean, Associate Professor

I had the great privilege of being taught by remarkable university teachers as an undergraduate (BSc, Chemistry) and graduate student (PhD, Biomedical Sciences). After so many years, I am still “imprinted” by their contagious excitement about scientific discoveries, their unconditional commitment to excellence in teaching, and their consistent ability to reach out to all students, which helps foster a deeply positive and supportive learning environment in the class.

Over the years, I have come to realize the extremely important role that they played not only in my career path as a student but also in my personal growth as a teacher at UBC. What I valued the most about these teachers and peers was their honest and profound passion for teaching, and their insatiable interest in developing creative original methodologies and approaches to help us develop solid process skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem-solving, and writing) and nurture our intellectual curiosity and creativity.

As a teacher, I firmly believe in these values, and they represent the foundation of my philosophy of teaching. I view my role not only as a facilitator/catalyst of learning by developing engaging and exciting lectures, but also as a teacher of other important values that empower and develop students’ experiences and future capabilities, such as becoming a responsible learner, developing a strong work ethic, and always reaching for greater levels of excellence in the lab and in the classroom.

Over the last 15 years, I have learned a great deal from designing and teaching two challenging virology courses, MICB 306 (Molecular Virology: 1999-2002; 2013-current) and MICB 406 (Advanced Topics in Molecular Virology: 2004-current). In contrast to MICB 306 (>180 students), MICB 406 was intended to maximize student participation, discussion, and individual presentations, with an enrollment cap of 23.

Since 2004, I developed MICB406 for those 4th-year undergraduates who are seriously interested in virological research and considering a graduate research career in virology. The course is designed to emphasize current research topics in molecular virology and problem-solving at an advanced level. In 2014, I decided to challenge the MICB406 students with the writing and presentation of a novel and unique collection of short educational scientific articles that addressed “hot” topics (“PEARLS”) of relevance and importance within the field of molecular virology. The “PEARLS” concept developed in MICB406 is based on the very successful series “PEARLS” published by the journal *PLoS Pathogens*. The homework assignment was extremely challenging (e.g., a research proposal restricted to 10 pages, not including figures) and required important reading and effort from each MICB406 student to identify and develop their “hot topic”/“PEARLS” proposals. I believe that by the end of the class, the MICB406 students learned to (i) write a scientific abstract and detailed scientific research proposal, (ii) review, critique, and evaluate important and complex scientific literature in virology, and to (iii) think about key and future “hot” areas of molecular virological research and how today’s research findings relate to the improvement of Canada’s health and tomorrow’s new antiviral therapeutics. It is my opinion that in the near future, our annual MICB406 “PEARL” collection of short educational scientific articles in molecular virology could represent a unique online resource for learning and teaching virology to undergraduate students in Canada and around the world.

In summary, I believe that over the years I have succeeded in developing a unique set of dynamic and interactive teaching methodologies that trigger a very exciting and robust positive learning environment in the MICB 306 and 406 classes. What is equally important to me is that I have come to realize that my role models have successfully achieved one of their most important goals, to equip me with the skills and passion to aspire, in my turn, to make a difference in my students' career goals. This is a special privilege associated with our profession as university teachers, and I am thankful for the opportunity, each year, to help students achieve their academic goals and acquire the skills they need to have a productive career.

My favorite comments from MICB 306 students (2013) –

- *“Dr. Jean is an allstar: He inspires interest in virology and shows a deep caring for his students and their learning. Thanks Dr. Jean.”*
- *“Jean is a wonderful prof who truly wants his students to do well. He is a great presenter and has a lot of passion for his research.”*
- *“Really enjoyed his lectures. Such a passionate lecture that definitely inspired interest in the topics covered.”*
- *“Dr. Jean is an excellent instructor who displays his passion and interest in the course material during the lectures.”*
- *“He put in so much extra time to make sure that we were doing well on our assignment. He definitely genuinely cared for us. He also kept the class interesting with his discussions on current research.”*

My favorite comments from MICB 406 students (2009-2014)

(2014) *“I really enjoyed Dr. Jean’s teaching style. It is very refreshing to have an instructor that is sincerely invested in student learning and dedicated to inspiring and motivating each person in the class.”*

(2013) *“Dr. Jean is one of the most passionate professors at UBC, who makes students' learning experience one that would be remembered for a life-time. With UBC being a research-based university, I did not expect to meet professors such as Dr. Jean who truly cares for his students, demonstrates passion for the research he does, and inspire us to go beyond our potential. UBC is highly privileged to have a scientist who not only makes a difference in the scientific community but also in the future generation.”*

(2012) *“Dr. Jean is a very effective teacher. I loved this course. Dr. Jean communicated very clearly what he wanted us to learn and he helped us to his best abilities to acquire this knowledge. Thank you Dr. Jean for a class full of quality and inspiration.”*

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(2011) *“Dr. Jean really helped me grow as a microbiologist student and took me to another level in understanding research in virology. It has been a pleasure listening to his lectures and one can see his passion for research.”*

(2010) *“Dr. Jean is very inspiring and encouraging. This course influenced my future career path in a positive way; it opened up my perspective and interest in molecular virology. Just loved this course!”*

(2009) *“I was taught to be self-driven, manage time wisely, present effectively, and to exercise original thinking at the frontier in the field of virology. I will take the lessons learned in this class into the future as a graduate student.”*

