**Michael Hollis Teaching Philosophy**

My teaching philosophy focuses on three critical areas:

1. **Critical Thinking**: For both students and faculty, this is an essential skill. Particularly in an online environment, the professor must think critically about his own approaches to teaching. I have to ask myself if there is a better way or another way to approach teaching this subject? I have to ask myself, is this approach meeting the needs of my student, or did I simply choose the way I have always taught it?

It is also essential that the professor is challenging his students to think critically. In an online world, this is about making sure that the students are actively engaged in online discussions that are more than just affirmations. It is about getting the students to engage in discussions that move the subject along and inspire more profound thought about the problem. It is also about carrying over those concepts into all of their assignments.

2**. Practical Problem Solving**: One of the critiques of the Liberal Arts, in general, is that it is not relevant to the vocations that most students choose to go into. I, therefore, make sure that I am demonstrating to students the relevance of the topic in their field. I am also challenging them to find the relevance themselves. As a result, I have had students come up to me at the end of a course and tell me that if they had known how relevant this topic would be, they would have been studying in this field all along.

In all fields, a focus on practical problem solving can take the theoretical concepts and allow the students to see how they are relevant to them in their daily lives.

3. **Community Service**: To help bring together the first two points and to bridge the divide between academia and the community, I try to get students to think of ways that their classroom work can be of benefit to the community. This gets the students up to an even higher level of learning as they can now move beyond recitation and simple application to try and find original ways to use what they have learned in a useful manner. Whether or not they choose to implement these things in the community is up to them. The fact that they have demonstrated this level of knowledge and application is the key to show me that they have truly learned.

Beyond these three critical areas, I think that the professor today has a variety of roles to fill. It is up to the instructor to determine what that role needs to be with each student. If working with a dissertation student, sometimes my role is to be a motivator keeping them on track. Other students may need a strong lecturer. Some simply need a guide or role model.

It is my job to meet each student where they are at and help them on their academic journey, no matter where it may take them.