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Tips for Talking about Teaching on the Job Market

Talking about Teaching in Written Materials

1. *Play to (and describe) your wide experiences as strengths!*
 - a. What will make you stand out from other candidates is the specificity with which you can describe what you have done and will do. Make sure you communicate your experience directly and narratively in your job letter.
 - b. Do not simply list courses in either your job letter or your teaching philosophy statement. That is mind numbing and insults readers. They could just look it up on your CV. But you can't assume that readers will grasp the "big picture" from a quick reading of your CV.
2. *Don't lead with course numbers and titles of courses—and consider leaving them out.*
3. *Consider beginning by describing your teaching experience in terms of a range.*
 - a. Level of courses: "I have taught a wide-range of courses, from freshman composition to an upper-division British literature survey."
 - b. Types of institutions: "I have taught students in several different institutional settings, including the freshman composition sequence at our large state university and literature courses at a nearby community college."
 - c. Types of students: "I have taught students of many skill levels, from remedial instruction to at-risk high school students to honors English majors."
4. *The old saw: show, don't tell.*
 - a. As much as possible, let brief descriptions or anecdotes demonstrate that you "love teaching", "love literature," or are "a people person," and forgo these and other clichés.
 - b. Don't make other approaches to teaching seem less sound than your own, e.g. not "I use discussion because it's the best way to draw out students." Instead, "I have found what works best for me in drawing out students is a discussion-centered classroom."
 - c. Consider quoting your students' glowing comments from evaluations, perhaps followed by an acknowledgment of their partiality.
 - i. "Last semester, in an evaluation of my teaching, one student wrote xyz. Although I certainly don't expect that level of enthusiasm from every student, such comments show me that I'm on the right track in the classroom."
 - d. In a letter for a teaching institution, include specific examples and stories.
 - i. Consider naming texts that you've paired or listing one or two authors and works that you've taught and what you've done with them.

Highlight texts others in your field and beyond would recognize and many would appreciate.

- ii. Steer clear of the wacky examples. The point here is to stand out with your professionalism and memorable detail but not for your creativity or offbeat approach.
- iii. Briefly describe what you did or might do in a typical class period and how students responded.