

STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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When teaching the course on the history of the city of Barcelona, my philosophy centers around student participation and interaction with the subject material. I accomplish this not only by motivating students to reading accounts from the different historical periods, but also by encouraging them to observe and interpret monumental structures, analyze contemporary events, or simply notice details that seem odd to an American but are not readily apparent to natives who have grown accustomed to regarding curiosities as normal events in their daily lives. As an intellectual and cultural historian, I interpret the present in light of the past and pay particular attention to the changing meaning of events, texts, and symbols. To cite a simple example, the image of the famous Catalan dragon (the *Drac*) in the middle ages was different from how the architect Antoni Gaudí interpreted it in Park Güell at the beginning of the twentieth century, or from how it evolved in popular festivals or from how it appeared in the opening ceremony of the 1992 Olympic Games.

Students in my course on Barcelona will also appreciate how the city is a microcosm of European history. One can trace the influence of Western Civilization by simply walking about a radius of a few kilometers and observing Roman, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Neo-Classical, and Modernist architecture styles and urban designs. By walking through the streets of the medieval city, the Rambla, and the grand Passeig de Gracia one can appreciate the changing sense of space from medieval to modern times. By looking at maps and accounts of the city, we can see how the center changed and neighborhoods became dedicated to different activities from one century to the next. As such, I combine classroom readings with lectures, field trips, and various visual aids.

Learning the history of Barcelona is an interactive experience that requires a certain degree of imagination but also obligates the student to think beyond initial appearances. In order to develop this analytical ability, it is necessary not only to experience the city but to learn the intellectual tools by preparing for class and doing the assigned readings.