My philosophy of teaching is to teach as if it is the only reason I am on the planet.

My philosophy developed from two unlikely sources and one likely one.

The likely source was a mentor of mine, Allen M. Krass, a patent attorney in Michigan. Allen, I immediately noticed, talked to everyone -- employees, clients, waitstaff -- as if that conversation were the only claim on his time. He also has a quality that I characterize as knowing how to say no in a way that leaves the door open for yes. This brightens the future as well as the present for all concerned. I strive to be like Allen.

The unlikely influences on my teaching philosophy arose from emotions: hating law school and loving the theater.

Most people who teach law loved law school; their success in that environment may dim their otherwise excellent critical faculties. I, by contrast, did not love law school and was successful there only for the first semester, after which I dove to the middle of the class. But those unhappy years provided me with a mental list of what I would do and not do if I were ever to teach law, unlikely though that seemed at the time. (It came to pass when a family move to Ann Arbor in 1990 coincided with an opening in Michigan to teach patent law for the 1991 winter term.) My least good teachers thus taught by negative example: I do what I wished they had done and I don't do what I wished they had not done. More details are at http://www.stanford.edu/~rjmorris/WASHBURN/WHATIDO.DOC, an update of a piece prompted by a teaching methods listserve discussion a few years ago. Here are a specific and a general imperative to myself for each of do and don't: Always read the assignment the night before class word for word (no skimming allowed); Always be prepared; Never cold call; Never waste class time.

The positive yet unlikely source of my teaching philosophy was the fact that I love an audience: being in one, but even more, having one. In college and law school, I did theater. The energy flow between speakers and listeners buoys me up and keeps me focused. I'm fully on when I teach. It's exhausting and exhilarating, just like being on stage.

My philosophy is also informed by 4 R's, 3 L's and of course a P for preparation. The R's are respect, read, revise, and remember. The L's are love, learn and listen. Most of those are self-explanatory, but let me explain about love.

Years ago at a bar association dinner, then Chief Judge Markey of the Federal Circuit gave a speech where he said -- according to the ridicule that followed -- that love was the answer. I thought he was right. In teaching, love is the answer because, with regard to the subject, it means total enthusiasm and an overpowering urge to keep up and keep engaged. With regard to the students, love means giving them total respect and never second-guessing nor ascribing anything bad (bad motives, bad brain, bad attitude) to them until overwhelmed by evidence beyond a reasonable doubt. (My thoughts on choosing to like in advance of actually liking, something every teacher should do, are in my unpublished essay, "The Lima Bean Effect," at .../WASHBURN/LIMABEAN.DOC).

A marvelous mentor, an attitude about law teaching, a love of the stage, 4 R's, 3L's and a P have made me strive always to teach as if it is the only reason I am on the planet.