

Dr Narayanan Ganapathy

Department of Sociology



Dr Narayanan Ganapathy has been the recipient of many teaching awards over the years both at Faculty and University levels. It is easy to see why. Articulate and knowledgeable, creative and charismatic, his effectiveness as a teacher and the degree to which this is agreed upon may be seen in the many nominations for the Teaching Excellence Award for SC2212.

One of the things that makes Dr Ganapathy's teaching so effective is his blending of praxis and theory. Dr Ganapathy's desire to 'bridge the realm of conceptual thinking and teaching with ... [the] lived realities of individuals and social groups [under study]' has led him to build field research into his teaching at all levels. Project work emphasizes the importance of making links between real data and the theoretical models being worked with, and the relevance of the abstract discipline to the 'real world' is constantly reinforced. Dr Ganapathy's own experience in the field is brought in to illustrate and flesh out the ideas in his lectures, and this obviously works very well, to judge by the frequency of qualitative comments in his feedback that say how helpful to the understanding of theory it is.

One of the hallmarks of an excellent teacher is his/her ability to inspire critical thinking in students. Dr Ganapathy's statement of teaching philosophy expressly articulates his desire to encourage students to 'engage in a process of self-reflexivity which involves a critical appreciation of their own world view vis-à-vis the phenomenon under investigation'. That he has succeeded may be referenced against the constant refrain in his feedback to that effect: 'forces you to probe into topics', 'He's ingrained in us a critical non-biased approach to societal workings...', 'Extremely knowledgeable and has really introduced elements of critical thinking' etc. are just a small sampling of such tributes.

Other strengths are in evidence as well – his ability to hold student attention effortlessly is one such strength. And the articulation of his ideas – clear without yielding sophistication – is yet another. But passion, that important intangible that best fuels communication and motivates students by example is perhaps the most outstanding element of Dr Ganapathy's teaching: 'Very passionate, ... sustains our interest week after week.' 'He is very passionate in his area of study and his passion is contagious.' 'It is highly obvious that Dr. Gana is very passionate about what he is teaching and this inevitably affects students.' It is best summed up however, in the words of the student who wrote:

The greatest strength of Dr Gana is, without a doubt, his passion for Sociology. He doesn't speak about it, but it shines through during his lectures. It is this passion which has inspired me to further my knowledge in Sociology. ... I always felt that attending his lecture is akin to ... listening to Passion speak...