

# Failing in front of your peers: A feminist pedagogy of logic

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# Where it all began



- The dreaded PGCAP
- 20+ years experience
- The awkward place of logic

# Making it up as I go

- Math pedagogy assumes students are mathematicians
- Philosophy pedagogy assumes students aren't doing logic

# What is required to successfully learn logic?

- 1 Can you follow directions?



Only when  
used as a  
compound  
adjective.

- 2

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# What is required to successfully learn logic?

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- 2
- 3 Are you willing to make a fool of yourself in front of others?

One of these is not like the others

# Barriers to learning logic

- Laziness
- Fear

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# Dancing on the edge of uncertainty

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Learning only happens when the boundaries of ignorance are pushed. How do we get students comfortable with this?

- Care
- Expectation

# If you don't care, why should they?

Care about. . .

- . . . your subject matter
- . . . your students

# Expect great things, and you'll get them

- Don't make them guess about what you expect from them
- Don't make them guess about what they can expect from you

# Planning for failure

- The cost of failure must be less than the prize of failure
- When students are in a place of security, failure isn't so scary
- It isn't just something the teacher must do; there must be student buy-in too

## Making it up as I go, part 2

April 2024, Amplifying Underrepresented Voices in Formal Philosophy workshop, London:

*What you're doing is trauma-informed pedagogy!*

## Trauma-informed pedagogy (1)

*To be trauma-informed, in any context, is to understand how violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences may have figured in the lives of the individuals involved and to apply that understanding to the provision of services and the design of systems so that they accommodate the needs and vulnerabilities of trauma survivors. A central tenet of this view is that individual safety must be ensured through efforts to minimize the possibilities for inadvertent retraumatization, secondary traumatization, or wholly new traumatizations in the delivery of services (Carello & Butler 2014, p. 156).*

## Trauma-informed pedagogy (2)

Two questions to ask:

- What kind of trauma do students bring to (symbolic) logic classes?
- How can we design our classes to minimise the impact of this trauma?

## Feminist pedagogy (1)

*Trauma-informed* pedagogy is *feminist* pedagogy insofar as they share the same aims / strategies.

*Feminist pedagogy begins with a vision of what education might be like but frequently is not. This is a vision of the classroom as a liberatory environment in which we, teacher-student and student-teacher, act as subjects, not objects. Feminist pedagogy is engaged teaching/learning—engaged with self in a continuing reflective process; engaged actively with the material being studied; engaged with others in a struggle to get beyond our sexism and racism and classism and homophobia and other destructive hatreds and to work together to enhance our knowledge; engaged with the community, with traditional organizations, and with movements for social change (Shrewsbury 1987, p. 6).*

## Feminist pedagogy (2)

- is a liberatory process
- focuses on creating spaces of emancipation and transformation
- cares about inclusion and exclusion
- is about “making space for collective care in the classroom”, where this care is a collective responsibility of all members in the classroom (Wilkinson 2025, p. 8)
- highlights the importance of autoethnography (Wilkinson 2025, pp. 2–3; Coia and Taylor 2013, p. 10).

## Why it matters

- If we care about logic, we should care about making logic accessible (Uckelman 2025a).
- If we want our classes to be accessible, we should be think carefully about our teaching methods; we should aim for inclusive, rather than exclusive, pedagogy.
- Feminist/trauma-informed pedagogy seeks to create spaces for this type of inclusion, whatever the content being taught.
- Feminist teaching of logic matters because it is a way to ensure our discipline remains as robust and as strong and as future-proof as it can be—recruiting the next generation of logicians widely.

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