J. E. Elsensohn
j.elsensohn@gmail.com

No one lives his or her life in a vacuum. The ability to see how you and your research fits into the larger, global picture is essential in our interconnected world. Training in a single expertise is no longer enough. My interdisciplinary background and research inform how I approach teaching. One of the fundamental goals of higher education is for students to develop and refine their critical thinking skills: interdisciplinary training forces you to think about a subject from multiple perspectives and question your assumptions. For undergraduates, this type of learning can allow them to experience new things and expand their worldview. For Masters and PhD students, it's easy (and often recommended) to keep your head down, stay in your lab, and get your research done to graduate. That may be a valid approach for some, but my belief is that universities should invest in whole person – not just disciplinary – training. Moreover, I don't believe teaching is restricted to the classroom. Whether it's running an outreach, meeting with congressional offices in D.C., or in the laboratory mentoring undergraduates, I view all these experiences as teaching moments to teach or learn from others.

Teaching approach and experiences Everyone learns differently and at their own pace. As such, I use a combination of teaching methods – from understanding to creating a la Bloom's taxonomy – to allow students to tailor their experience to their needs. Informational handouts or presentations are used as a tool which serves to anchor and guide in class discussion and exploration.

Many aspects of my career have allowed me to develop key skills that are translational to teaching, including but not limited to my role as retail manager, in student debate, or in moderating and leading workshops. While the majority of my graduate career was funded through research fellowships, I sought out teaching opportunities as they arose. I guest lectured for several classes on different topics, led seminar classes, and most significantly, in the spring 2018 semester I served as the instructor of record for an undergraduate class entitled "Insects and People", a course designed for non-science majors. Teaching this class was the capstone project for the university-wide Preparing the Professoriate program, which is similar to the more familiar Preparing Future Faculty program. These programs aim to help graduate students and postdocs train for an academic position. I tried out several approaches to enhance the student experience, including bringing the students out of class and into the community through outreach and gamifying the more detailed aspects of the curricula.

Mentoring I have mentored and trained four undergraduate women in the last four years, helping them develop as scientists and as persons. At times I was sharing my expertise, other times we charted a new course together. I believe this mix of active and instructional learning creates a better bond as the mentee gets to observe the human side of science – there are often as many failures as successes, but it's important to keep trying.