

## David Angelo - Position Statement

---

Jan 17, 2026

Dear Mr. x,

I can't believe it's been roughly a year since I took your Theory of Knowledge and English classes... wow. I'm writing to you now because, as you know, I'm studying engineering, and I'm taking this specific course called Praxis! It really had me thinking carefully about what engineering, design and engineering design actually mean, and how I want to approach them. Given your experience in this field, I only thought it was appropriate that you receive this letter.

Through the process of learning to sit with uncertainty throughout my life, I've come to understand these three concepts as overlapping ways of thinking. Right now, I see engineering as a blend of disciplines, which are really grounded in structure, constraints and technicality, 'models' as we may have defined them in TOK. Design to me is functional and interpretive, being shaped by one's values and context, having specific intentional choices (with aspects such as visuals). Engineering design is where I have to navigate the space, in other words, the intersection between the two, especially with an open and interpretive lens.

I think that many of my current understandings trace back to the habits and open minded thinking you encouraged in your classroom. I became comfortable asking where claims come from and who really holds authority. Growing up around conflicting belief systems - my parents, I learned early on in my life to reflect rather than follow. They've really led me to a more agnostic position on life. I wouldn't say it's a rejection of meaning, but as a humble acceptance that my knowledge is always partial. I now carry that same humility into university and engineering. Because of this, I think of myself as an engineering student, not a student engineer. I'm definitely a learner first, and I'm sure you'd agree.

University has been scary with all this new information, but it's also really fun! It's really not like high school at all, and I'm not quite sure if I exactly would want to go back to high school yet. What's been helping us quantify problems is to simplify our reality using models, like in this course called CIV (basically working with bridges)! Models are really powerful and they are essential in pursuing knowledge. However, they're incomplete (if you remember, my TOK essay was on this ideology ;). So, to build on my current definition of engineering design, I'd say that it begins once models become insufficient, as in, once we need to rely on our own judgment.

Hey, I'd like for you to see this photo that I took in 2024 at Taylor Swift's Eras Tour!



You can show this to your daughters if you'd like, I know how much they like Taylor Swift :). Being at the Eras Tour was a really wild but incredibly fun experience. I've reflected on how it went at least a week straight after attending it! It really had me thinking about what being a 'Swiftie' (that's the term for a Taylor Swift fan) really means. This might sound like a stretch, but this experience showed me how learning, by extension, design and engineering, depends on community, and being at the Eras Tour really made this idea tangible for me. Just look at how many people there are, all with a shared interest. Immersing myself in a community that shares meaning, and emotion transformed my experiences listening to Taylor's music and playing music myself!

Having spent years in band, I recognized that same process at work, it's a community. Engineering design, I've come to realize, functions similarly! Solutions gain meaning only when they are situated within the communities they are meant to serve, as in, their 'stakeholders.' (It's quite cool how much language from my Praxis course overlaps with what we learned in TOK!) Oh, and how's Mr. x doing? I hope his band is doing well!

This is how I currently approach engineering design. My experiences taught me to examine assumptions, and remain aware of my own role. Of course, my position is still evolving, and I expect it to. What matters to me is remaining a student at heart. Curious, reflective, and willing to revise how I understand both the work I do and the impact it has. I've been really keen about adopting this 'student first' mindset because I've been having tensions between being an engineering student or a medical student... but I think that's for another time to discuss.

Mr. x, I don't think I can say this enough, but I wholeheartedly thank you for teaching me how to question well. I've carried this with me into every problem I encounter, and I will be sure to do that in the future as my outlook on the world keeps evolving. I would really love to catch up with you some time in the future! :)

Sincerely,  
David

P.S. could you include when you receive this when you get back to me? I decided to mail this to you by printing out an online document I wrote, instead of just sending an email, but I wonder how long it'll take for this to actually get to you!

---

END PIECE.