

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

The English word “teach” originates from the Old English “tæcan” and means “to show, point out”. As an instructor for economics classes, I try to follow the spirit of this etymology by not simply providing students with the information and knowledge, but by showing them how to understand and interpret the real world phenomena and events. This is especially important when teaching economics courses, because economics affects every individual and it is crucial to encourage students not simply to study, but to comprehend the events around them and to develop an interest in the subject.

My guiding principle to encourage students to learn is based on the rule that every class hour should not be simply the means of delivering information from the textbook, but rather a tool to make students involved. To promote a better understanding, I try to use as many real life examples in my teaching as possible. For every model, definition or formula, I try to find a related event or phenomena that can better explain the idea of the subject. My international experience and knowledge of history allow me to provide dozens of examples from different countries and time periods. Also, the events of the recent years – actions of the government, policies of the Federal Reserve, and ongoing financial crisis – affect every student in class, and are especially appealing as case studies during the course. Analyzing recent news using the tools and models covered in class is extremely beneficial in terms of making students interested in the subject and involved in the discussion. Showing a relevant illustration to ensure that students grasp the idea works extremely well for theoretical or difficult topics. Frequent class discussions are important for letting students deliver their ideas to the rest of the class, share their experience or views, and create a friendly atmosphere. Very often when receiving a question from a student, I do not answer it immediately, but redirect it to the rest of the class to encourage other students to debate over it and try to find out a reasonable explanation or solution to that question.

To increase the effectiveness of the lectures, I make my own handouts containing condensed and well-structured notes for every class. This helps the students to follow the discussion and make brief notes, instead of extensive writing during the class. Some students find my handouts to be even more useful than the textbook in preparation for the tests. Furthermore, I always keep updated class web-page with all the handouts and worksheets covered in class, as well as with additional learning tools, such as self-study quizzes and references to the related web-sites. I also immediately inform my students in class and via e-mails about any course news, upcoming assignments, or deadlines in order for all of them to follow the course schedule.

In addition to delivering the knowledge to students, showing that you really care about the class and follow up with the progress of each student is a very effective way to encourage their learning and participation. By the middle of a semester, I remember almost all my students by name, and I know how he or she is doing in the class and his or her last grades. I find it to be the best method for increasing students' attendance and efforts when they realize that you really monitor their achievements and can comment on their performance. For this reason, while extensively using on-line learning systems such as MyEconLab, WebAssign, and BlackBoard, I frequently assign paper homeworks and essays. Grading students' papers provides additional information about each student's personal advantages and weakness so I can give personal feedback to each student.

Another means to be an effective teacher is being open to students' questions and needs. It is not always easy, but I encourage students to contact me either directly or via email whenever they have questions or need an extra help. I try to be flexible in accommodating make-up tests or holding extra office hours. Many students find it extremely useful to stop by after the class or during the office hours and get help on specific questions.

Finally, a very important part of teaching practice is fairness. I take it very seriously from my side to be fair to students in terms of grading, explanations, and treating all the students equally. I also strongly demand students to be fair with me and with their classmates – in terms of their assignments, answers, and efforts to learn.

To conclude, being an effective teacher for me is a challenging and important task that requires work, knowledge, and commitment, but it is rewarding to see how students comprehend and enjoy the subject, and I am very enthusiastic about devoting the rest of my life to teaching.