

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

A course taught successfully is one in which students learn not only the material presented to them, but how to apply these lessons to the world around them. The material presented in undergraduate economics courses is particularly well suited to this goal. Seemingly obscure notions such as opportunity cost, gains from trade, principle-agent problems, transaction costs, regression analysis, and so many others, surround the student in their day to day interactions. Teaching students to recognize and apply economic thought prepares them for their future roles in business, and as educated members of society.

To this end, I teach economics courses with two goals in mind. First, students should be able to understand and explain the intuition behind the economic concepts presented in a course. Second, students should be able to apply this understanding to real-world situations and data. Given these goals, my teaching prioritizes intuition, both in terms of the concepts which motivate the models, as well as the mathematics which define the models. A professor adhering to this philosophy will leave students with an ability to not only perform regression analysis, but interpret the results and explain in both technical and non-technical language the merits of their analysis as well as the consequence of, say, the omission of an explanatory variable. In the context of microeconomics, the student will be able to calculate a cost of living adjustment and explain the intuition behind, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of compensating variation versus equivalent variation.

I also believe that it is the professor's responsibility to motivate students to learn. A professor should be engaging and accessible, and students should always feel comfortable asking questions during lecture and attending office hours. I try to accomplish this by reminding myself of what it was like to be introduced to the material I am teaching for the first time, and what it was like to not have a firm, intuitive, understanding of the mathematics required for a course. This enables me to phrase my lectures in language which is approachable, but neither pedantic, nor aloof. Students can be intimidated by mathematical notation as simple as the use of parameters or generalized functions of more than one variable. The solution is not to avoid the use of this notation, but rather to explain it in an understandable way such that students who are uncomfortable with calculus are able to understand the mathematics, while students who excel at math are not short changed the rigorous mathematical basis of the theory they are entitled to as students of economics.

Finally, I believe that a professor should be devoted to his or her students in a manner that extends past the classroom and into the mission of the university as a whole. Professors should be excited about a student who is interested in pursuing their own research or participating in extra-curricular activities and should be willing to offer his or her guidance on these matters. Students, and therefore the university at large, are served best by professors who practice this open-door approach and strong dedication to every facet of their education.