

I view my teaching philosophy in two parts; there is a goal and an approach. As a main goal, I strive to help students reach a deeper level of critical thinking and further develop confidence in their own thought process that goes beyond the subjects they study with me. I try to always remember that individuals are, in fact, individual. Tautological as that may seem, no two students will understand a concept or resonate with an explanation in the same way. To that end, I strive to build my lessons from the bottom-up, thinking of different ways information may be perceived, rather than simply getting the information out there to a classroom.

I have been an independent instructor at Ohio State University for six semesters. As an economics instructor, my focus begins with modeling. I start with a quote from George Box, “all models are wrong; some models are useful.” The importance of learning about useful models is straightforward, but why should we learn about something that is wrong? Beginning the semester discussing how what we are going to cover may be wrong opens the door for students to think critically about the material instead of just accepting and memorizing it. This is the purpose of the scientific method; to slowly critique and refine our thinking until we approach the boundaries of truth. There is always new research challenging what we know, and I want my students to believe that they can be a part of that process in any discipline they study.

Introducing a concept as wrong, but useful, allows me to challenge students to think deeper about what was *not* said. For example, I might ask: “What does this assumption miss?” or, “what ingredient would you add to the model?”. This both encourages learning beyond the classroom while reinforcing concepts and ensures that students’ critical thought processes play a central role in classroom discussion. Their responses allow me to gauge the class’s understanding of the lecture and what may be worth spending more time on from a different approach.

Since a student body is made up of many individuals, it is my responsibility to be familiar with how various issues can have distinct impacts on different people. To further my understanding, I completed the Diversity, Intercultural and Community Engagement Certificate (DICE) Program through the Center for Belonging and Social Change at Ohio State University. The DICE program brought into clear focus how various social structures can impact student learning. For example, international students may not utilize office hours because they think it is a burden on their instructor, or out of fear of their accents when discussing material. I take these lessons seriously and I have since began calling my office hours “student hours” and mentioned that everyone in my family speaks English as a second language as well. The effort was well received as both students and colleagues make mention of how they do not feel judged for their English when speaking to me.

I have taught Current Economic Issues in the U.S. at Ohio State University for three semesters, each time in line with my approach of building lessons from the bottom-up. All topics

covered come from student suggestions ranging from health insurance to environmental policy. Allowing students to have such an input in their education not only makes it more likely that they will be interested in the material, but also gives them the opportunity to make an investment in the course's direction, and thus work harder to see a return. Seeing an instructor build a lesson from a student's suggestion gives them confidence in their ability to identify interesting questions, helping encourage their own research for their final presentation and paper, where they have the opportunity to teach us about something they're passionate about.

During my teaching career at Ohio State, I applied twice to be the economics recitation leader for the Young Scholars Program (YSP) Bridge class and was selected both times. YSP is a program for "first-generation students with high financial need to advance their goal of pursuing higher education." Their Bridge program happens every fall semester to help facilitate the high school to college transition for these students. Naturally, this is a much more diverse teaching environment than the average economics classroom. I have found that YSP students are more likely to deal with imposter syndrome than other students, feeling that they are only at Ohio State because of the YSP program. This is the result of imperfect information; individuals believe they are the only ones struggling, when that is not the case. To remedy this, I held open-door study groups in my office where students and I can share strategies to think through problems when stuck, while also seeing that they're not alone in their endeavors. These efforts proved fruitful based on YSP's own evaluation forms, where students freely wrote about how "understanding Matt was" and how "he was a really easy person to talk to."

I have been recognized for my teaching service at Ohio State University, having been awarded the Economics Department Graduate Teaching Award twice. Even so, just like our economic models, I still have room for improvement. Every semester presents its own unique challenges, and thus its own unique opportunity to improve as an instructor. I use Ohio State's evaluation system, as well as my own mid-semester survey to seek out areas of improvement. For example, I had one student in my Principles of Microeconomics summer class mention that it was occasionally hard for them to attend lectures due to their job. The class was remote, but still synchronous, so lectures were not being recorded. Since receiving that feedback, all of my remote lectures are recorded and posted for student reference. I am honored to have received these awards and to have been appointed to these positions and look forward to the opportunity to continue to do so. However, I more look forward to the opportunity to help students find the confidence in themselves to achieve goals that once felt out of reach.