Alfredo Martin

Georgia State University

amartin90@gsu.edu
(734)9997702
alfredomartinc.github.io

220 26th Street NW
Apt. 1204
Atlanta, GA 30309, US

Teaching Statement

I have had the opportunity to attend several classes in many diverse topics, from procedural law to real analysis, going through ancient philosophy, the politics of public policy, and statistics. The courses that I enjoyed and learned the most of were those where I had to apply theory to real-world situations. Specifically, all these courses had three things in common: 1) they used relevant examples based on real situations; 2) they used challenging homework and projects as the main learning mechanisms, and; 3) teachers had a genuine interest in the success of their students. I believe in the importance of involving the student in the learning process, making them internalize and apply theories, and, most importantly, allow them to struggle while they do it.

As the only lawyer in a master's in economics, struggling became central in my day-to-day studying. With most of the concepts being new, I had to push myself to understand the basic theories that for my classmates were obvious. I understood how struggling could help students appreciate the extension and limits of theory in ways that simple memorization cannot. As a graduate student instructor in statistics, for the master in public policy program at the University of Michigan, I asked students to get used to struggling. I gave them problems beyond what was required, and helped them after they showed me they had a plan to solve it, even though it was wrong. It was gratifying to see struggling students finally understand the material and showing their understanding through increased participation in classes. The comment I received the most in my evaluations was that I was patient. I encouraged students to solve the problems by themselves, and I guided them only if they kept hitting a wall. If you are patient enough, you realize that most of the time, students get the answers by themselves.

I see teachers as a learning compass, more than just a lecturer, where the learning process happens through self-motivation and student's struggle. Giving students challenging homework and projects, forcing them to think critically and deeply about the theories learned, to doubt of what seems obvious, and understand the practical limitations of such theories, is a fundamental aspect of any course pretending to have a long-term impact on students' knowledge. This is especially relevant in applied economics courses, which I am most interested to teach.

Finally, allowing students to understand how theory is applied in real cases, its limitations and

challenges, and the impact it has on institutions and welfare, deepens the learning process in significant ways. I have had seven different microeconomics-related courses, but it was only in those where relevant cases were integrated into the theoretical analysis where I learned the most. Not because teachers were better, but from greater self-motivation. In one class, for example, we studied a cost-benefit analysis of an environmental project, and we had to create an alternative evaluation for the case. In another course, we analyzed collusion cases that were currently discussed in courts, focusing on the evidence presented, lawyers' arguments, and the impact on social welfare.

These three aspects – struggling, learning by doing, and relate concepts to a real and relevant application – are interconnected and work together to generate long-lasting learning that goes beyond a test or a class, and encourage students to have an impact in society. That is my objective as an educator.

Every student comes from a different background and has a different pace of learning and internalizing concepts. Teachers must adapt to accommodate these different learning needs, guiding students in their process, and using the student's strategies to maximize their learning experience. In the learning process, the role of a teacher is crucial, but not central.