

My teaching philosophy is based on the three characteristics that I find distinguish a good teacher from a less effective teacher: widespread usage of examples, flexibility when the situation calls for it, and continued professional development. In this statement, I will briefly elaborate on each of these characteristics, providing some examples of ways in which I have sought to embody these throughout my time as an award-winning teaching assistant and a course instructor at the University of Toronto.

### **Using Examples**

First of all, I believe that in order to successfully keep students engaged in the material, it is important for the teacher to motivate the topic at hand. In general, I do this by providing examples that tie back the (often fairly theoretical) material to situations students may encounter outside of the classroom. For example, when I was teaching an intermediate macroeconomics course as a course instructor, the local news was dominated by a large layoff taking place at a nearby automotive plant. Therefore, when I covered models of unemployment in that course, I would briefly discuss these events and how they relate to the models covered in class.

These examples also come back in my tutorial and exam exercises, as well as in writing assignments. In particular, I find that by asking students to use the models they learned in class to analyze an issue that has attracted a lot of media attention, they tend to stay more engaged, as evidenced by students bringing up other events they read about in an attempt to connect these with materials covered in class. Furthermore, using “real-world examples”, especially in writing assignments, also allows me to challenge students on their intuitive understanding of the covered material (rather than their mathematical ability to solve a model), thereby helping students to improve their ability to communicate model results to a non-specialist audience.

### **Flexibility**

Second of all, I believe that a good teacher is able to steer the class through all the important material that should be covered in a course, while still being flexible and responding to the needs of different class cohorts. In particular, this means that rather than sticking to a rigid course schedule, I like to leave some room open on the schedule. This time can then be used to further elaborate on a topic (if the class is having trouble with a particular concept) or to cover further examples and case studies.

On an individual level, I also strive to be flexible and sensitive to the needs of individual students. In particular, I strive to be accessible outside of class time so that I can patiently provide explanations of concepts from a different point of view if an initial elaboration on a topic caused any confusion. I have found that being able to patiently explain a concept from a number of different points of view helps a student to stay engaged with the course (encouraging them to repeatedly visit office

hours if needed) and eventually perform better, as measured by test and assignment scores as well as the types of questions asked in class and office hours (which tend to become more insightful over time). I view this patience and accessibility as one of my main strengths as a teacher, as corroborated by student evaluations, and it lead me to win a teaching award for my work as a teaching assistant at the University of Toronto.

**Continued Professional Development:**

Finally, I believe that a good teacher continuously seeks to keep developing their teaching strategies. During my time at the University of Toronto, I have sought to do so through a series of workshops (as part of the “Teaching Fundamentals Certificate”). In these workshops I have learnt about a number of techniques that I have since implemented in my classroom. One example of such a technique is the “ticket out the door”, which I used as a course instructor. Here, I asked students to write down any lingering thought or question on a piece of paper and hand it to me on their way out at the end of the class. This allowed me to come back to some of the common questions or comments at the start of the next class. Since the class I was teaching was fairly small in size, this worked well as I was able to come back to almost all comments and questions. This was appreciated by the students, who felt like their concerns were truly being listened to, and this was eventually also reflected in my evaluation scores, which were substantially above the faculty and departmental average.