

Teaching Statement

As an economics teacher, I focus on the ways in which economics as a discipline can enhance not just our understanding of economic issues but also a student's general education and understanding of the world. I emphasize to my students that economic thinking can help make difficult problems approachable and that economics understood alongside the other disciplines that they study can make valuable contributions to the world and to their own thinking.

Teaching Background

In my time at the University of Texas at Austin (UT) and in my concurrent experience at St. Edward's University, I have had the exceptional opportunity to teach and assist in a wide range of courses, from the basics of microeconomics and macroeconomics to more advanced courses like Economic History, International Finance, and Comparative Economic Systems. This experience is complemented with a background in teaching practice that includes a teaching methodology course at UT as well as participation in a pedagogical workshop at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas. Receiving my undergraduate education at the College of William and Mary, I know first-hand how engaged professors who view their teaching responsibilities as a valuable contribution benefit students. This view of teaching is one that I embrace, and I would welcome the opportunity to continue to blend my dual roles as a teacher and researcher.

Classroom Environment and Assignments

I structure my lectures to encourage students to think through the material like economists, as I think this is the longest-lasting contribution our classes can provide. To encourage this thought process, I will frequently relate a topic of recent popular discussion to an underlying economic question and then encourage students to consider why this question might matter to us. While I come to class prepared with motivating material, I like to work through this part of the class in a Socratic fashion, helping students to build economic intuition and to distinguish facts from opinions. I then address the relevant model, careful to present the model clearly and in a sequence that minimizes student confusion. I prepare especially for this part of my lectures and am careful to plan ahead for anything that I will present – special cases of the model, different examples, etc. When students express difficulties with models, I like to remind them that while models do not fully represent reality, they help us grapple with the complexities of reality and make assessments and predictions.

Given the nature of the material covered in most of my classes, my primary instructional method is lecture-style, but I complement this with unique assignments that I believe I differentiate my courses. My students will go on to a wide range of careers, including working as business-people and analysts. Many of them will be responsible for applying economic analysis to large and difficult problems and then relating their findings to others. It is critical, therefore, that they are able to explain economic reasoning in straightforward and uncomplicated language. I have students write in-class essays explaining economic concepts, models, or methodology as if to a layperson. I then provide written feedback correcting inaccuracies and suggesting stylistic improvements. Students then have the weekend to revise their essays for full credit. This

assignment helps me to assess student understanding and, over the course of a semester, leads to significant improvements in student ability to articulate difficult concepts. This skill, I believe, is one that will longer lasting benefits to them and in a wider context than any specific model that they learn in my class.

For introductory courses, I assign homework through online portals. These assignments give students multiple attempts to get a question right and provide constructive feedback throughout the process. Students generally respond well to these assignments as they provide ample opportunity for practice. For more advanced courses, I assign model-based problems and make solutions available. To encourage students to work through the problems themselves rather than copying the solutions, I do not grade these assignments, but emphasize that working through the problems will enhance their understanding and ultimately lead to better performance. I have found that students typically embrace these assignments and more generally my approach to teaching. Despite the significant workload involved in my classes, I have consistently been rewarded with very high evaluations.

Student Interactions

The relationship between student and professor can have profound impact on the student's interest in learning. My approach to students is characterized by respect, accessibility, and genuine interest in their well-being. On a practical level, this means knowing students' names and making every effort to remember some details about them as well as their current standing in the course. It further means responding promptly and politely to emails, holding frequent office hours, and being available before and after class to discuss questions and concerns. I find that a little bit of availability goes a long way in earning student trust and respect and, consequently, their attention and interest.

In any one-on-one interaction, I think it is important for the student to be an active participant in their own understanding rather than passively receiving information from me. I therefore use office hours to help students reason through problems and questions. While this method takes a little longer than simply answering a question or working a problem myself, I find it facilitates greater student understanding and ultimately helps the student to take charge of his or her own learning.

As a teacher, I love seeing my students make connections between what they learn in my class and what they see in the world. I find that teaching keeps me on my toes as a learner as the need to communicate economic ideas to my students requires that I constantly think of new ways to explain concepts.