

Teaching Statement

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As an undergraduate, I was drawn to the study of economics because of its diverse application to real world problems. It is my goal for my students to see economics as a problem solving tool for life. The course descriptions on my syllabi typically end with, “The overall goal of this course is equip you with the tools to become a more effective problem solver and to teach you to think like an economist.”

Since economics is so applicable to the real world, I find the best way to teach the material is through extensive use of examples and analogies. Often I will ask students to describe what they would do in a given situation. Then when they give the rationale for their choices, I tell them the economic terminology that fits. I find it helpful to avoid scripting my lectures too much. This allows me to adjust my approach based on gauging the students comprehension and interest. As part of this extemporaneous lecture strategy, I foster classroom discussion and encourage students to ask me questions about things they heard on the news or things they have experienced. These discussions often last well beyond class time, and I regularly converse with students for 20 to 30 minutes after class. I find these conversations—both in class and out of class—are what really get students excited about the course material. Despite the lack of structure, I am quite successful in guiding the discussion toward the teaching objectives of the day and rarely fall behind my course schedule. I reinforce the formation of critical thinking skills by asking analytical questions on tests and assignments and avoid evaluating the students on their ability to memorize the material.

At Huntingdon College, a small liberal arts school in Alabama, I learned to value quality instruction and student-faculty interaction, and I hold my own performance as an educator to a higher standard because of my experience. I have taught a diverse set of students in many different environments. In addition to Emory University, I have taught courses at a small teaching-oriented university (Clayton State University), a historically African American liberal arts college for women (Spelman College), and a large research university (Kennesaw State University). By the time I graduate from Emory this summer, I will have instructed 16 classes, including principles of microeconomics and macroeconomics as well as introductory statistics and econometrics. I have always received excellent teaching evaluations.

The opportunity to teach and interact with students is one of the primary reasons why I chose to pursue a career in academia. I find the experience extremely rewarding, and I genuinely enjoy watching students grow as intellectuals. On a selfish note, I believe that teaching makes me a better researcher. It reminds me of my passion for economics and continually forces me to think about questions differently. I think that viewing teaching as a mutually beneficial activity between my students and me is what makes me an effective instructor.