Statement of Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is grounded in a humanist-constructivist pedagogy inspired by Paulo Freire. Working with social movements in Brazil, I learned that winning hearts and minds entails empathy and connection. As a professor, I begin from the realities students bring with them—or, as we used to say, “a cabeça pensa onde os pés pisam” (“the mind thinks where the feet stand”). Inclusiveness is central to my teaching: it means recognizing, respecting, and, where possible, adapting to the diverse origins, experiences, and interests of each student. Yet I believe a truly successful higher education experience combines openness to dialogue with the structure and discipline needed for intellectual growth.

As a youth leader and an *educador popular*, I collaborated with the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) to organize *vivências*—immersive experiences in which students were introduced to social issues in the classroom and then lived with and learned directly from members of the movement. I also participated in PROLEC, a rural adult education initiative led by the University’s Department of Education, where I taught mathematics and physics to prepare adults—many from *quilombola* communities, Afro-Brazilian rural settlements founded by formerly enslaved people—for teaching careers that blended academic training with traditional knowledge.

In the college classroom, I build my practice around three principles: first, rapport matters, and students must be heard; second, learning is demanding and requires a balance between curiosity and discipline; third, the classroom is shaped by complex power dynamics, between students and instructors and among students themselves. In my syllabi design and classroom management, these principles translate into structured exposition combined with applied, positive engagement. Classes are designed to encourage participation and dialogue, with the professor modeling openness and respect. Every question or contribution from a student is treated as an opportunity for deeper engagement, never left unexplored.

My lectures are paired with activities that require students to apply, present, and critique ideas. For example, in Money and Banking and International Economics, students present podcasts or policy news stories and lead peer discussions, while their classmates prepare commentaries. Because learning deepens when students revisit material from multiple angles, I also begin sessions with short review-and-apply questions answered individually or in small groups before moving into class-wide dialogue.

Theory and the philosophy of science are the central pillars in my approach to economics and the social sciences. Without theory, scientific practice is little more than a shot in the dark. Without a philosophy of science, theory is vulnerable to subjectivity and personal biases. In class, my theoretical exposition is comparative and critical. My microeconomics students, for instance, are challenged to reflect on the philosophical underpinnings of neoclassical utilitarianism, while my Marxian Economics class encourages a critical view of the labor theory of value. Nothing is to be taken at face value.

But theory devoid of practical matters can sound mystical and impenetrable. Another hallmark of my pedagogy is a hands-on approach with primary sources as a bridge between theory and policy. In my International Economics courses, for example, I have students navigate the Bureau of Economic Analysis and International Monetary Fund databases to extract real-world data on balance of payments accounts, exchange rate movements, or capital flows. By working directly with these primary sources, students learn not only the mechanics of the datasets but also how to translate the models we study into data-driven interpretations.

In recognition of my teaching approach, I was awarded a University Teaching Assistantship (UTA) at the University of Utah, a competitive fellowship that supports outstanding graduate instructors. As part of this award, I designed and will teach an original course titled *The Dollar and Global Financial Inequality*. The course combines theories of international finance with the postwar historical evolution of the international monetary and financial system (IMFS), highlighting the central role of the U.S. dollar and the challenges faced by emerging and developing economies. Alongside core materials, I integrate three methodological tools: first, students present “micro-research” on news items or articles they find relevant; second, they develop themed reports on the evolution of the IMFS; and third, they practice short one- to five-minute essays that strengthen both their analytical reasoning and writing skills.

As an immigrant scholar, I bring perspectives from the Global South into my teaching, encouraging students to see how global hierarchies shape both theory and practice. I seek to create a learning environment that values critical reflection, dialogue, and the ability to connect abstract models to lived realities. My goal as an educator is to equip students not only with analytical and empirical skills, but also with the confidence to question and to imagine alternatives within a complex and evolving world.

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