

Teaching Philosophy: Sarah King

Growing up, I always thought that I would pursue a teaching career. As I went further in my studies, I found a love for economics, but the desire to teach and inspire a future generation of thinkers was always there. Economics is a great field in that it provides a foundation in many different disciplines such as policy, business, law, education, and more. Students who understand economics truly have the potential to change the world. My hope as an educator is to not only give students the tools they need to be successful but to inspire them to use these tools to make a difference no matter what path they may choose to take. My teaching philosophy focuses on student engagement, creating an environment that is comfortable and conducive to student learning, and connecting economic concepts and analytical tools to other areas of study and real-world settings.

One of the most crucial aspects of effective teaching is student engagement. No matter how interesting or important the information is, students will not properly learn it if they are not engaged. Therefore, my goal when teaching is to not just lecture in class; rather, I intend to make class interactive so that students think about the material throughout the class. While the most common way that teachers make class interactive is by asking questions and having students simply raise their hands to answer, I do not believe this to be the best method as only a small fraction of students ever respond and may even make some students uncomfortable. Instead, my approach is to engage all students in the question by quizzing them throughout the lecture in ways that allow all students to think through the question and provide an answer and to use breakout groups or “think-pair-share” activities to work through a problem. These methods have proven to be highly effective with students, as students have reported that they felt the whole class could engage in discussion and that the class was very enjoyable.

While student engagement is important, it is also essential that students feel comfortable and included in the classroom. I want my students to feel comfortable participating in class discussions. I have found the above interactive methods to be effective in including all students, even if they do not want to speak up in front of the class. In addition, I utilize discussion boards, especially in larger courses, to encourage the students to engage with the material and with each other without the pressure of in-class participation. I also try to foster an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions without the fear of being wrong. I do this by ensuring that I never tell a student that they are wrong but instead encouraging students by recognizing what they do know. For students who still may not feel comfortable engaging in class, I want them to feel comfortable coming to office hours. I do this by making an effort to be welcoming, friendly, and accessible. Students have responded positively to these efforts stating that I am easy to talk to, have a nice attitude, and am very available for student questions. Finally, I believe that empathy is one of the most important factors in impactful teaching. This includes being understanding of student needs, which was a valuable lesson that I learned teaching during the pandemic at one of

the most diverse institutions in the country. I realized that students face issues that I may never fully understand so I must recognize that and provide students with the necessary support. In addition, I have learned that it is important to listen to students about their needs and to adjust be of service to them. I have put this into practice through mid-semester surveys to better understand how I can improve for the students and what they need to learn better. In addition, I want to be respectful of different viewpoints and backgrounds, especially given that many of my students may be very different from myself. Students will not want to engage if they do not feel safe in the classroom, and this begins with the instructor.

My main goal in teaching is for students to be able to apply and use the information beyond just one class. Specifically, I intend to focus more on higher-level thinking in class (Armstrong, 2010). While memorizing facts can be important, it is more valuable for students to be able to use those facts to develop analytical tools and to have discussions about topics in economics. Thus, while some exam and homework questions may test lower levels of thinking, most will encourage students to apply what they know to real-world scenarios and use concepts learned to solve new problems. In addition, I want my students to be able to use what they learn in other classes and other aspects of their lives. While upper-level students may be learning concepts at a higher level, I hope that both principles-level students and upper-level students leave my class with the ability to connect what they have learned to other courses and with a better understanding of how economics presents itself in the real world. I foster this by facilitating relevant discussions in class and using various forms of media. Ultimately, I believe economics is an interesting field relevant to many other areas of study. Not every student in my class may be majoring in economics, but every student should be able to come away with a greater understanding of the world and with the ability to use economics as a tool as they further their studies.

I am prepared to teach a variety of applied microeconomics topics, including labor economics, urban economics (economics of cities), experimental/behavioral economics, and economics of education. I would be especially interested in developing courses on special topics in education, including research methods in education, the economics of teachers, and the economics of K-12 education, as these directly relate to my research. However, I also enjoy teaching principles courses, including both microeconomics and macroeconomics. I particularly enjoy teaching policy-relevant topics as these are likely to pique student interest and encourage them to think about how understanding economics can influence the world.

Armstrong, P. (2010). Bloom's Taxonomy. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. Retrieved May 23, 2022 from <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>.