

# Teaching Philosophy Statement

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I have had many different opportunities to teach over my life. While serving in the United States Marine Corps as a linguist I had the opportunity to teach and train soldiers of the Afghan National Army skills and theoretical concepts required for their jobs. As an undergraduate I was a teaching assistant in two mathematics courses, including a course focused on helping students who lacked sufficient mathematics preparation for college. As a graduate student I taught lectures and guided discussion sessions as a teaching assistant and served as an instructor for an upper division course, where I wrote the syllabus, selected material, and wrote assignments. I have also provided professional tutoring for undergraduate economics courses and served as a volunteer for the past three years as a bilingual math tutor at two local Catholic schools that focus on serving Hispanic and African American middle schoolers. In my next role I would like to teach an economics course that focuses on economic inequality to teach undergraduates about current work being done in economics that is of public interest.

Even as a researcher I believe that teaching is an essential and important part of our role. Both in the classroom and when presenting our research, we need to effectively communicate so that our audience understands what we are doing or teaching, why it is important, and where to go next from our research or course material. Because of that in my teaching I seek to

- 1) **Overcome obstacles in understanding:** I try to anticipate and address problems that students might face in understanding the material presented. Because it is often difficult to measure how well students understand material, in all my classes I try to create an environment where questions are welcome. From my experience with diverse groups of students I know how language barriers, disabilities, or differences in learning style can create obstacles to understanding material. Whenever possible I seek to give students the resources they need to learn the material at their pace in a way that works for them. This includes being flexible with office hours or incorporating different methods of teaching concepts such as using visual aids, anecdotes, definitions, check lists, tables, group work and class activities.
- 2) **Communicate what the purpose or importance of the material is:** I believe that a student will be more engaged and more eager to learn if they understand why the material they are being taught is important to them. Or by teaching them how they can use the material in the classroom to solve the questions that they are interested in. For this reason, I seek to identify what students' interests are and I seek to relate the concepts I teach in class to topics that students are interested in or reflect public discourse. For instance, while teaching Cost Benefit Analysis, I used examples that are current subjects of debate, such as urban development, free tuition, criminal justice reform, and job training programs for the formerly incarcerated. I also created a class project that allowed the students to use the Cost Benefit Analysis framework we learned in class to study a policy designed to overcome an issue they found important.
- 3) **Promote further inquiry and questions:** I also believe that my role as an educator is not ultimately to tell the students the right answer but to teach the students the methods and the tools they need to find the answer for the questions they are interested in. This means that often when I present material in class I am very clear on what the assumptions are that lead to the result I derive. Whenever possible I show them how things can change if different assumptions are made. For instance, after discussing a model about immigration, I asked my students what they thought was missing from the analysis and what effect they thought including this missing piece would have. Similarly, when I learned that the minimum wage was a policy students were interested in, when I discussed the minimum wage, I covered its effects in multiple market settings. I then discussed the ways the students themselves can evaluate which market was more appropriate. That way students left the class with an understanding of which further questions to ask and what to look for in the economy to answer the question they were interested in.

If students understand the material, why it is important and useful for them, then they leave the course empowered to ask further questions and search for answers. If I can stimulate their interest in the subject and if they see economics as useful for solving issues they care about then I believe that I have succeeded as an educator. I believe that if students have an experience like this, not only will they enjoy the material more but will find the subject worthwhile to learn. Additionally, I hope this encourages more interest in further studies and careers in economics, especially amongst underrepresented groups, by showing them how economics can help them solve and understand the problems they care about.