

Teaching Philosophy

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I am passionate about teaching economics. An economics education starts students on their path toward becoming engaged citizens making informed decisions. This path requires that students apply what they learn to their lives and the world around them. My role is to help them make these applications and to encourage students' curiosity in every class.

The introduction to economics classes I taught was often a student's first and possibly last exposure to economics. Students came from a wide variety of backgrounds and interests. I start by changing their perception of economics. It is not primarily about stocks, bonds, and banking. I explain the breadth of the field and its lessons as a "way of thinking." I use research to demonstrate the breadth of the subject. I often mention my own study of the economics of drinking, which always grabs their attention. I discuss the effects of school on juvenile crime, the effect of race on judges' decisions. Examples like these motivate and apply basic concepts. Thus, while pollution is an externality, I share the research showing that in addition to influencing health it influences crime rates. Application is demonstrated and curiosity peaked. This carries over to my homework and exams that incentivize critical thinking and application. My questions force students to think and do not test rote memorization.

I prepare with many examples and problems to make sure every student understands and relates to the material. Besides bringing my own examples, I use individual students' interests and topics from their academic major or interest. In my statistics class I often use data about the Green Bay Packers, but I had a geology student who did not watch sports. I added data about soil type and distributions of crop yield to illustrate linear regression. When teaching supply and demand, I discuss the returns to college using actual median wages by education group. I ask them to predict what happens to future wages when the supply or the demand for the college educated change. This typically starts a discussion with wide participation. I also use changes in political leadership, immigration policy, and the pandemic as platforms to discuss supply and demand and to allow students to present their insights and concerns.

The student body at UW-Milwaukee is diverse demographically. I learned a great deal from this diversity. It helped me gain a better understanding of the variety of student concerns and has made me a more responsive and respectful teacher. Recently, teaching at UW-Whitewater, my students are nearly all business majors, young and from the surrounding rural and suburban areas. I changed my examples and applications and heard different concerns. I have also adapted to courses taught largely on-line. I need to be completely accessible to my students in-person or remotely, synchronously or asynchronously. Students need flexibility in their coursework in such uncertain times. I work to maximize interaction and discussion with the students given the technology.

I find teaching rewarding both because of my success in passing on knowledge and the because of the knowledge I gain from my students. I have taught a wide range of classes: Principles of Microeconomics, Principles of Macroeconomics, Personal Finance, Statistics, and portions of graduate level econometrics classes. I look forward to additional teaching challenges.