

## **Statement of Teaching Philosophy**

by  
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While I was pursuing my doctoral degree at the Department of Economics in the George Washington University, I worked as a teaching assistant for discussion sessions of Principles of Microeconomics and Macroeconomics courses for undergraduate students and a Ph.D. level Microeconomic Theory course. In recognition of my teaching excellence, I was awarded the 2005-2006 Columbian College of Arts and Sciences Teaching Fellowship and received university funding for teaching my own courses. As an instructor, I taught several undergraduate level courses such as Principles of Microeconomics and Macroeconomics, Money and Banking, International Trade Theory and Survey of International Economics.

Through my academic experience, I have learned that teaching requires hard work, a great deal of patience, leadership, and establishment of trust. Teaching goes beyond simply standing in front of a class and reciting what you know. In fact, the classroom lecture is a special form of art, in which voice, movement of the body, facial expression can interact with the knowledge communicated to the students. Despite all of the effort needed to become an excellent teacher, I know from my own as well as my parents' experiences, who are both university professors, that teaching can be a very rewarding profession. When I ask myself what makes teaching economics so appealing, I realize that it is the opportunity to make positive differences in the lives of generations of students by helping them acquire new knowledge and skills, gain a better understanding of how the economy works, think critically about world issues, and eventually become better citizens.

Economics is not a simple field of study – it requires reason and logic, an ability to envision problems abstractly, and also the ability to simplify the complexities of real world issues and isolate key concepts. Because economics is very analytical in nature, it can be a very difficult subject to learn. Over the many semesters that I have been as a teaching assistant and instructor, I have often seen several students professing that they are “not an economics person” or even they “hate economics.” Therefore, as a teacher I have the difficult challenge of converting a room full of students with a wide range of academic backgrounds, enthusiasm, and confidence levels into a collection of people who can reflect positively on their economics education. To address this challenge, I have developed several approaches in my teaching philosophy.

Teaching economics requires presenting theories, concepts, and empirical material to students in a way that they can integrate this information into their own life experiences. Only when students are able to recognize the relevance of the subject matter, they gain the intuition, inter-disciplinary skills, critical thinking as well as the curiosity to understand the economic problems in the real world.

Over the years, collating my academic and professional background with a variety of concrete examples has helped me tremendously to keep the class materials relevant to students. For example, my research experience at the IMF on the multiple facets of the globalization phenomenon has enabled me to enrich the international economics courses. Furthermore my master thesis on banking system crises in Japan, the United States and Sweden as well as the research projects I participated at the Asian Development Bank Institute on financial system reform in Asia have been particularly valuable for teaching money and banking courses. I also have related my training experience in Toyota Motor Corporation in Japan while discussing the firm level decision making in microeconomics classes or foreign direct investment patterns in Asia in international trade courses. As part of the regular homework assignments in macroeconomics courses, I have asked my students to write short essays on real world case studies such as monetary and fiscal policy options for a country like Argentina with high inflation and debt. I have observed that following this approach, students develop a greater appreciation for what the economic perspective offers to understand current events and policy debates.

I believe that every student can learn. In order to reach the highest learning potential, I emphasize clarity in my teaching. I look at the class material through the eyes of my students, taking into account their prior knowledge level, strengths, weaknesses, and familiarity with economic terminology as well as backgrounds, attitudes, and abilities. As a research assistant at the IMF, I had a unique opportunity to observe experts effectively communicating even the most complicated economic problems to a wide variety of audiences including elite academic economists in conferences and seminars, policymakers, and the general public. I believe that teaching in a university environment is similar in many ways - a large class will always consist of students

with differing backgrounds and strengths, and a good instructor should present material in a way that acknowledges such variation. To present my lectures in the clearest way, I give a great deal of importance on well-organized lecture notes. I also use several complementary pedagogical tools including a course website at the Blackboard where I post articles from the newspapers like the Wall Street Journal, Financial Times or the Economist, and academic or policy oriented research papers as well as visual learning aids such as computer-generated images, animations, cartoons, and graphical analysis to accommodate different styles of learning.

My second approach in realizing the highest learning potential is to help the students overcome their frustration when they face difficulty grasping economic concepts. I believe the best way to achieve this is to give special attention to weakest students by teaching them how to think like an economist using models and graphs, encouraging their efforts, inquiring about their study habits, and then offering study and test taking strategies tailored to their needs. In order to increase the one-to-one communication, I make an effort to be available for student questions after classes and often outside of office hours. Students appreciate this supportive and welcoming attitude. As a result of such active engagement, some of my students have significantly improved their grades towards the end of the semester and overcome their initial fear of economics. I am always delighted with a sense of pride when a student I am helping tells me, "Now I get it!"

I believe teaching is a cooperative experience and as a result, part of the learning experience should involve interaction with other students and with the teacher. A crucial component of such interactive class environment is to encourage my students not only to ask questions, but also bring in their individuality and a diverse set of worldviews to the classroom. For example, in international trade courses, I have been pleased to see that many students bring in examples from foreign countries that they have traveled or lived, or knowledge they learned from other courses as we cover broad range of controversial topics such as effects of trade on labor in Asia, Latin America or Africa, outsourcing, and difficulties faced by the developing nations in the international trading system such as agricultural subsidies. I believe that learning economics becomes more interesting when such intellectual connections with life experiences and other disciplines are explored.

I strive for being an advisor to my students as well as a teacher by demonstrating that my interest in their education reaches beyond their experience in my classroom. As I place a special emphasis on student-teacher interaction, I like to hear about my students' plans, sharing my experiences with them, and giving them advice on how to accomplish their goals. It has been a gratifying experience to see that some of my undergraduate students take my advanced courses after having completed the introductory ones. I have successfully motivated some students to choose economics as their major or supported them with my reference letters to pursue master degrees in related subjects like finance. In addition, many of my students in the graduate microeconomic theory classes, who are now at advanced stages in their Ph.D. programs, have often told me that my dedication to teach and genuine concern for how much they learned from the problem sessions, my informative and insightful responses to their questions, and my ability to convey their concerns to the professor have helped them a great deal in surviving their first year in the Ph.D. program. Over the years, I have become a mentor and a role model to them by providing advice on how to study for comprehensive exams, find a dissertation topic, fulfill their teaching obligations, and establish relationship with the faculty based on my experiences in the department.

Teaching has been an important part of my professional life. I firmly believe that any good teacher remains a good student throughout life. I aspire to reach perfection in the mastery of my craft by learning from my students and colleagues as I mature in this profession.