

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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Reflecting on my learning experience as an undergraduate student, two courses stand out: Principles of Microeconomics and Number Theory. My professor for the Principles of Microeconomics frequently used real-world examples to illustrate new concepts, which helped me understand economics as a way of thinking and appreciate its relevance to real life. My experience in this course led me to declare an economics major. My Number Theory professor actively invited me to attend her office hours, where she not only discussed course content, but also introduced me to her research, which showed me a world of mathematics beyond our class. She also encouraged me to take more advanced math classes, and I took Topology at her recommendation, which proved an intellectually stimulating experience and very helpful in my graduate coursework. My experience in their classrooms is part of what inspired me to become an educator, and they are role models for my teaching. I believe that all students belong in the classroom, and that every student can become a successful learner. It is my responsibility as a teacher to guide my students to approach learning in ways that can realize their own potential, and to empower them to become independent thinkers and lifelong learners. Therefore, my primary goals for teaching are to create an inclusive learning environment where every student feels seen and welcome; to connect concepts to real-world context to help students understand how to apply economic theory and see the big picture; and to design and utilize assessments that challenge students to critically examine their learned knowledge and help them develop critical thinking skills.

I believe that creating an inclusive and welcoming environment is the foundation for a productive learning experience for students. Only when students feel welcome and included in the learning environment can they focus on learning, and when they feel comfortable in the classroom, they are freer to express themselves, engage with the class, and ask questions which help them learn. At the outset of each course I teach, I introduce a set of course agreements, where I emphasize mutual respect as a core value of the class and welcome everyone to express themselves truthfully and authentically. I also try to know each one of my students: in the first class, I hand out index cards to everyone and invite them to write things about themselves they want me to know, which can include preferred name, pronouns, year in school, and hobbies, etc. Making myself available is another one of my priorities - I invite students to come talk to me about anything that's on their mind, both in- and outside of office hours. When I was a teaching assistant for Principles of Microeconomics, a first-year student came to my office hours to ask me about her major choice. I walked her through my experience as an economics major in college and talked about the different career options with an economics degree and the relevant coursework for each. Later she told me that the information I provided had helped her make the decision to become an economics major.

Economics fundamentally provides a framework of thinking and analyzing the world. However, to new students without prior knowledge of the discipline, economic theory might seem complicated and unintuitive at times. I want to help my students develop economic intuition and learn to analyze the real world using the economic framework. To achieve this goal, I always provide real-world context when I introduce new concepts and illustrate theories using real economic events. For example, when I introduced the concept of the short run vs. the long run in the Principles of Microeconomics, I showed students a news story about the bike shortage during the pandemic. I talked about how Shimano, a major bike component manufacturer, was not able to keep up with demand initially, but was able to open a new factory after a year, which shows that firms can enter and exit a market in the long run, but not in the short run. Understanding economics in a real-world context helps students bridge the gap between theory and application, develop economic intuition, and spark curiosity and interest in the subject by showing its

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relevance to their everyday life. Throughout the course, I also assigned small reflection questions where students are asked to identify an experience in their life where they used economic thinking when making a decision. A student noted in their course evaluation, "Her homework focuses on motivating students' economic logic. She encourages students to use their economic knowledge in their life, not limited to economic questions."

As an educator and teacher, I believe my role is to guide students to learn how to learn, and to help them evolve into independent and lifelong learners. In my teaching, I challenge students to critically examine their learned knowledge to cultivate critical thinking skills, which will help students not only in their academic journey, but also in their personal and civic life. When I introduce a new model, I always emphasize the assumptions involved and make sure to discuss the limitations of it: when the assumptions in a theory cannot capture the complexities of the real world, the model will fail to predict real-world outcomes. I use market failures as the perfect example - when there are costs and benefits not accounted for among the producers and consumers in a market, perfect competition will not achieve the socially optimal outcome. When students are able to examine the specific context of an economic situation to determine whether a concept or theory will apply, they will better grasp the concepts, apply them, and develop real world mastery. Another aspect of cultivating critical thinking is fostering a culture of always asking questions and not being afraid to make mistakes. I encourage students to ask the what, why, how, and what-if's with real-world economic problems: what economic concepts are involved, why a certain theory can predict outcomes or why not, how can we identify cause and effect, and what if we implement an alternative policy solution. In my Principles of Microeconomics course, I designed a capstone project which involved analyzing a news article by asking these exact questions using the knowledge learned throughout the course. Students showed a lot of interest in the project, analyzed scenarios from the toilet paper shortage and the oil price spike to pro tennis sponsorship and coffee supply chain problems, and proposed sensible policies and solutions using the knowledge they had learned. Based on student feedback, I plan to incorporate similar but smaller assignments when I teach the course again this summer where students identify one concept from a news article each week. This helps students exercise and develop their higher order thinking throughout the course and scaffold up to the capstone project, when they will be prepared to take on a more comprehensive challenge. Through engaging exercises like this, I encourage and empower students to become independent thinkers and decision makers.

Teaching brings me much joy and fulfillment, and I view it as a tangible way of contributing to society by helping guide the next generation to become more capable thinkers and decision makers. I also believe that teaching is a two-way street: the students are learning from me, and I am also learning from them. In addition to mid-course and end-of-term evaluations, I utilize frequent reflection exercises in class to identify areas that are challenging for students, which informs ways I can adapt my teaching to better address these challenges. I am also continuously learning and improving my teaching skills. I participated in a seminar on college teaching through the Center for Teaching Effectiveness at UC Davis, where I learned about research-based teaching practices and engaged with graduate students from diverse disciplines and exchanged ideas and perspectives on teaching. My colleagues in the department are also valuable resources: other professors and graduate students have unique perspectives on teaching in the economics discipline, and discussions with them often help me learn about effective teaching practices I can implement in my own classroom. The Center for Education Effectiveness also offers a wealth of resources and workshops, which I will continue to utilize to learn and grow as an educator. I am confident that I am prepared to teach a number of courses including Principles of Microeconomics, Intermediate Microeconomics, Financial Economics, Labor Economics, and Behavioral Economics. I plan to introduce my research to students in Behavioral Economics by incorporating a module on the fast-growing field of research on motivated reasoning and belief updating. In my role as a teacher, researcher, and mentor, I welcome and guide each and every student through their journey to become an independent learner, encourage them to connect their knowledge with the real world, critically examine the things they learn, and empower them to become independent decision makers and leaders.