

Teaching Statement

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Teaching should focus not only on accumulating knowledge, but also on expanding students' ability to learn effectively. My pedagogic philosophy emphasizes independent and creative thinking, a desire to understand and question the norm, and the perseverance needed for students to accomplish their goals. My teaching philosophy has been heavily influenced by my experience in graduate school. As a student, teacher, and attendee in conferences I have learned that audiences and students differ in their backgrounds, goals and expectations. This awareness further promotes my need to strike the right balance between advancing the class as a whole, and catering to the specific needs of individual students. I rely on the following guidelines to fulfill my teaching goals:

Understand Your Students

Students differ in their backgrounds, goals and expectations. Teaching requires a thorough understanding of students' needs. At the beginning of my first class, after I introduce myself, I always ask students their reasons for taking the course and their expectations from the class. Besides the generic answer about fulfilling a course requirement I have heard some inspirational answers that demonstrate students desire to study a myriad of topics ranging from government policy and income inequality to financial crises and business cycles.

These answers provide me a glimpse of the learning goals of my students. After I know the students' goals, I am able to design and adjust the course to help them realize their full potential. Given the diversity in goals, teaching involves a certain amount of flexibility from the professor and a transparent syllabus which outlines, among other things, the potential for adjustment related to class feedback. Furthermore, a professor should teach in a way that stimulates interest and challenges the students with an advanced target, without leaving behind those students who might have some trouble with the material or the method of teaching.

Critical Thinking

The process of learning economics does not merely depend on memorizing principles and equations. Economics is a dynamic field, which is constantly open to questions and critique. Therefore, in my classes, I require students to write reports on journal or newspapers articles, and encourage them to relate the issues discussed in the articles with the principles learned in the course. This process encourages students to think critically and to ask the right questions. I have also noticed that discussions on important economic issues and active class participation help students expand their perspective on the subject and come up with creative solutions to economic problems discussed in class.

Learning by Doing

For most students, exercises are the most effective way to learn the course material. To encourage them to practice problem sets, I always make clear that effort and knowledge of the material will be rewarded with good grades while lack of effort and poor knowledge of the material will be penalized.

In addition to problem sets, I also try to convey the material in a way that keeps the students engaged. This involves relating the classroom material to economic issues that may be current or interesting to students. This can be done through presentation of current news articles, analyses of government or community decisions. If students feel comfortable participating in the learning environment, they will be more engaged in the subject and understand the material better.

Finally, a teacher should always be open and flexible to students. The more feedback a teacher gets from the students the more she/he will learn about the best way to relate the topics to the students. This feedback will allow a teacher to improve her/his teaching skills and method. I am a firm believer that a good teacher will not only measure how students learn from their lectures, but also have an understanding of how they can learn from, and adjust to, their students on a daily basis. This ability to adapt and adjust to the temperament of each individual class will prove to be an immeasurable asset in goal of maximizing students overall learning potential.