
Teaching Philosophy

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I design my courses to be interactive experiences. Here, students experience hands-on learning, study economic foundations using textbooks, and apply these foundations to journal articles and popular press books. This setting allows students a wide variety of sources beyond the traditional textbook so that students can apply the materials. My greatest inspiration for teaching comes from the *Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch. Each section of my teaching philosophy stems from a quote that personifies my role as an educator.

Teaching Objectives

“A lot of people want a shortcut. I find the best shortcut is the long way, which is basically two words: work hard.”

I focus on applying economic analysis to everyday situations. When teaching upperlevel undergraduate and graduate level economics courses, applications are the most important course objective. I expect students to increase proficiency in three areas: (1) economic reasoning, (2) quantitative analysis, and (3) critical thinking skills. When students complete their economics course, they should be able to recognize economics in action. Attending a public university, students should recognize why they receive a government subsidy or why vending machines from two competitors locate next to each other. If they can increase their ability to recognize economics in everyday life, then they have already started improving their critical thinking skills. One way to reinforce application of materials are “Everyday Economics” assignments that I issue over Spring Break and Thanksgiving Break.

Performance Expectations

“Experience is what you get when you didn’t get what you wanted.”

Students encounter many obstacles in their undergraduate and graduate careers, but their most valuable experiences will come when they least expect it. Students will fail at something at least once in their lives, but if they can learn from it then the event transforms from a failure into personal growth. I firmly support dropping a fraction of assignments so that students have the ability to fail on a small scale, learn from their mistakes, and improve. I expect students to work diligently on assignments throughout the semester and, meanwhile, improve their performance. The nature of my courses is such that hardworking students can overcome small failures and still achieve a high grade in the course.

Teaching Method

“You can always change your plan, but only if you have one.”

My lecture notes for the week fill about two-thirds of the allotted class time. I leave gaps in my lecture plans so I can involve students in hands-on learning projects or integrate videos into lecture. If students interactively perform some of the economic phenomena they learn in class, their retention of the material increases significantly. Because students have a wide variety of learning methods, I am a firm believer in integrating music, videos, podcasts, and news articles into the classroom so that students can see, hear, and touch the application of economics. I find it important to utilize technology and social media to encourage group interaction. I have created a Twitter account for my students to interact with course-specific information. This is a venue where students re-tweet specific economic examples they relate to. For students without Twitter accounts, I offer late-night study sessions before exams, as well as collaborative online study guides. Both methods were extremely well received. Many students are no longer fulltime students; being accessible through different means allows all types of students access to studying opportunities.

Improving as a Teacher

“When you see yourself doing something badly and nobody’s bothering to tell you anymore, that’s a bad place to be.”

Student evaluations can be one of the most uplifting experiences of the year, but they can also be one of the most deflating. While the positive critiques boost my confidence, I focus on the openresponse question entitled “What are one or two things the instructor could do to improve his teaching?” I print the comments and begin highlighting areas I can improve, while eliminating requests to simplify the course. Not only has this process resulted in more efficiently ran classrooms and better exam scores, but students have made the effort to tell me the course was challenging, and that they learned much more than expected. If my evaluations accurately represent the outcomes of my goals, then I feel I achieved my teaching objectives for that course. Students take the time, whether in person or through evaluations, to tell me how applicable my courses have been and how they feel they have improved their critical thinking skills.