

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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“Teaching is the process through which pedagogy delivers content in one or another kind of learning experience; learning is...a change in the learner produced by engagement with learning experiences. They are related but not identical.”

- We're Losing Our Minds, by Richard P. Keeling and Richard H. Hersh

The global economy is exceedingly complicated, as is explaining how it works. Teaching international economics requires the ability to break concepts down to their most fundamental components, then put them back together in a way that helps students appreciate how each part helps shape the global economy. My goal as an educator is to provide students with a clear and comprehensive understanding of economic concepts, and the tools necessary to examine the validity of theories based on empirical evidence. By doing this, I hope to make the material accessible and relevant to students, while developing in my students a passion for the subjects.

I favor a student-centered approach to teaching that engages students with the material and encourages them to think critically rather than be passive recipients of information. A student-centered approach can be pursued in a class of any size: it only requires active and engaged participation from both the teacher and students. To be an active participant as a teacher I make sure to teach with energy, conveying my own passion for the material. To ensure that students actively participate, I put a great deal of the responsibility for learning on the student.

I assign problem sets, readings, and data analysis projects that encourage students to think critically outside the classroom. Then I engage students in discussions and challenge them to apply what they have learned to reinforce their independent work. My students work with economic data and economic arguments in academic research as well as in the popular press. Having students engaging with economic concepts in multiple mediums develops their ability to think critically about economics. I believe that the ability to think critically about economics is the most important skill students will learn in my class.

Twice I have taught upper division courses while at UC Davis. In teaching both International Trade and International Macroeconomics, I was responsible for designing my course, managing a teaching assistant, preparing my lectures and developing all course work. Both classes offered me the opportunity to apply my teaching philosophy.

In my International Trade class, I spent two lectures discussing multinational firms and the different incentives for offshoring and internalization of production. After presenting economic

theories of offshoring and outsourcing, I had students engage with the material by having an in-class discussion where I challenged them to explain the activity of multinational firms like Lego, Nike, and Toyota. To help students engage with these theories outside the classroom, I had them analyze data on intra-firm trade flows for the U.S. by industry and asked them to explain it using the theories we developed in class. These exercises made the material more tangible and my students active participants in their own education rather than just passive recipients of economic concepts.

In my International Macroeconomics class I had my students write an essay where they were asked to argue for or against Greece leaving the Eurozone. Throughout the course I asked my students to relate the new concept they were learning back to the case of Greece, which allowed my students to apply the theories we discussed in class to the real world. This assignment additionally presented them with the challenge of reading reports and articles in the popular press, assessing the arguments, coming to their own conclusion, and being active participants in their own education.

Teaching, just like research, is a skill that must be practiced and honed. Every class I teach is an opportunity to improve as an educator. Analyzing my student evaluations at the end of each term allows me to constantly evolve and improve as an educator. As a first time instructor I relied heavily on technology as a teaching tool, which included the use of lecture slides. In reviewing my student evaluations I found that a few student reported that they liked the class but felt I relied too heavily on PowerPoint in my lectures, which made it difficult for them to absorb the material.

When I designed my second course, International Trade, I thought hard about how to most effectively utilize technology to present the important concepts of international trade. I decided to rely less on lecture slides, employing them only to expose students to data that tested the theories I taught. I also incorporated new technology into this course. I had students watch videos about the global production of iPhones and listen to NPR podcasts about tire tariffs and WTO trade disputes. These different mediums allowed me to connect real world examples to everything I taught. As a result of these changes, students were more engaged and appeared to absorb concepts more quickly.

The field of international economics has seen enormous growth over the last few decades, and it will undoubtedly undergo more change in the years to come. One of the reasons I am passionate about teaching economics is because of the constant challenge presented by the growth of our knowledge. Each class I teach is an opportunity to improve the learning and teaching experience by refining the material I've taught before and developing new material to deepen my students' understanding of economics.