

DENISE WHALEN

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My teaching philosophy is based on the belief that students will be successful if they are engaged, active learners. This philosophy motivates my teaching strategy which includes clear and original presentation of material along with constant student involvement. My goal is for students to finish the course with a strong grasp of the subject matter including theoretical and real world applications. By engaging students inside and outside the classroom, I have transformed many students from detached course enrollees to critical economic thinkers.

Presenting material in clear and engaging ways grabs students' attention. Piquing their interests makes learning more enjoyable rather than a task and students devote more time to their education. This approach is critical to my teaching strategy. I begin every class with a brief review of the material covered during the last class period. When presenting new material, I start with the basics and build upon them. I constantly compare new concepts to former ones and point out the similarities between models. As I tell my classes, a basic tool set exists in economics which is applied to a multitude of scenarios. To extend upon theory, I present real world applications of the models including newspaper articles, statistics, and policy. I also include debates, games, and discussion on ways to improve theoretical models in my lectures. One game places students in the role of an unemployed job seeker faced with job search costs and lets them decide when to accept a job offer. Student evaluations suggest that these methods have been effective. For example, one student noted: "She clearly explained the concepts with real-world examples and brightened the mood of lecture with jokes and games designed to reinforce our discussions." Another student added: "Denise made the information understandable instead of boring and complicated as others have in the past."

The second step towards enacting my teaching philosophy is to keep students constantly involved throughout the semester. Too often university students put off course work until a few days (or hours) prior to an exam, and end up with shallow knowledge of the material. I keep students active through constant exposure to the material during lectures as well as outside readings and assignments. I strongly encourage class participation. In my experience, students who are active in class are more likely to continue to attend class, voice questions when they arise, and devote non-class time to the material. I also assign weekly homework assignments and quizzes so students do not have the opportunity to shirk their learning responsibilities. When students are up to date on material, the risk of falling behind or misunderstanding new concepts, that build on initial ones, is minimized. I also strongly encourage students to ask questions. I welcome general questions and challenge students to stump me or poke holes in the models we are learning. Students seem to thrive on these challenges. In addition to creating a welcoming atmosphere in the classroom I am also very accessible outside the classroom. On course reviews, students have noted: "I like how she comprehensively answers questions" and "She was always prepared and ready for questions. She was very understanding when students did not understand the material."

As an instructor, I work with students to reach a common goal of successfully mastering economics concepts. Working with students and challenging them to think critically and work diligently provides students of all abilities an opportunity to succeed in my course and beyond. My teaching style fosters a welcoming academic atmosphere for the students. I have thoroughly enjoyed my teaching experiences and look forward to applying my techniques in future courses in the years to come.