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Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is centered on the core beliefs that (1) every student is capable of learning the course material, and (2) the students will get more out of the class when they are engaged and are able to see how the material could be useful to them in the future. The successful student will leave my class with more than just a good letter grade. In my eyes, a successful teaching experience results in students who are able to think critically about the implications of government policies and to contribute intelligently to political debates. With these goals in mind, I have developed a number of teaching practices that are intended to actively engage students in the learning process and to clearly convey a difficult subject matter.

First and I believe, most importantly, in order for students to become fully engaged, they must be able to see the real-world relevance of the material. My work experience makes me uniquely suited to relate economics to the business world. Prior to graduate school, I spent almost two years working at an economic litigation consulting firm. In my consulting work, I used economic concepts and techniques on a daily basis. I try to bring this experience into my classroom whenever possible. For instance, one of my largest cases involved the dumping of foreign printing presses into the United States. I integrate this example into my class when we are talking about predatory pricing practices. I also use my experience with intellectual property and patent litigation when talking about sources of monopoly power. I have found that whenever I am able to relate my personal post-college work experiences to the course material, the students become much more interested. In fact, many students have come up after class or to office hours and asked about consulting work and the job opportunities available to economics majors.

Second, whether the lecture is presented via power point slides or with a more traditional chalk and talk, it is vital that the students have a clear idea of what concepts are important, how the concepts build upon one another and where the course is going in the future. Towards this end, I have created a course pack that closely follows the textbook and syllabus. Evidence from student evaluations suggests that the course pack is an effective tool. For instance, one student commented that the course pack “made the class easier to follow,” while another said the “course pack was great!”

Third, students must be able to translate class material from theory to practice. I truly believe that, like mathematics, economics is best learned through repetitive practice and examples. In Applied Microeconomics, this means working through problem sets. Wherever applicable, students are asked to demonstrate both a qualitative and a quantitative understanding of the material. For instance, when I cover the economic implication of taxes, students are asked to both graphically illustrate the impact of a tax on price and quantity as well as to solve for the new equilibrium using supply and demand equations. I devote a fair amount of class time to in-class problems. Students are placed in groups and are encouraged to work through difficult questions with their classmates. I find this active learning environment leads to a better understanding of the material and helps to engage the students. I also assign homework problems and provide sample midterms and final exams. Student feedback suggests that these problems are an important tool for both knowledge comprehension and exam preparation.

Finally, I believe that I will be a much more effective teacher if I am approachable. With this mind, I try to create an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions in class. I pose questions to the class and encourage students to answer, even if they are unsure of themselves. If the student has trouble, I lead them through the logic step-by-step or get them to arrive at the answer using their intuition. I also make myself available and encourage students to come see me during office hours. This outside help is particularly important for students who are uncomfortable with the math involved or those students who are less comfortable speaking in class.

I truly enjoy teaching economics. I look forward to teaching other courses and adapting these practices to fit the particular class environment. I believe I am an effective instructor and that my prior work experience gives me a distinct advantage when it comes to motivating class work with real life examples. I am confident that I will be an enthusiastic instructor and will continue to improve upon my current teaching skill set.