

## Teaching Philosophy

Friends advised me that economics was a dreadful subject, so I postponed a required undergraduate course as long as possible. The conventional wisdom seemed to be that the subject was both boring and nearly incomprehensible. Upon arriving in that dreaded class, however, I found a subject that was logical, methodical, intuitive, and applicable to life. These are the aspects of economics that I have always sought to communicate with students, working with them in a way that makes economic concepts both accessible and relevant for their daily lives<sup>1</sup>.

I have had many teaching opportunities, as both a teaching assistant and an independent instructor, in my time as a graduate student at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill; including Introduction to Economics, four semesters of Intermediate Microeconomics (for both majors and non-majors), two semesters of International Economics, and two semesters of Topics in International Economics (a senior seminar for economics majors). I was also a TA for Introduction to Economics, Intermediate Microeconomics, and U.S. Economic History. In addition, I spent one semester in the UNC-CH Public Policy department as a co-instructor for Introduction to Public Policy. These experiences have taught me to have respect for my students, enthusiasm for my course material, and clarity in my expectations. I begin each course by setting clear goals for the students in my syllabus (Appendix A). I constantly encourage students to actively participate in class by requiring them to answer my questions, and reminding them that if something is unclear to them, it is likely that other students have the same question. I also bring current events into the classroom to show the students how the material is relevant to their everyday lives. For example, when discussing the price elasticity of demand, I used the recent changes in the price of gasoline, and the subsequent decrease in demand to explain how elasticities can vary over time, and how the nature of that variance depends on the type of good. This is a concrete example that students can understand because they are living through it and see and hear about it on a regular basis.

During my time at UNC-CH, I have been honored with four awards for teaching. The economics department has rewarded my teaching with the Vijay Bhagavan Award for Best Principles Teaching Assistant in 2002, and Best Teaching Assistant – awarded to an independent graduate instructor – in both 2003 and 2004. In addition, I received a Tanner Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching – one of only five university-wide awards for graduate students each year, which was supported by a departmental nomination and 32 independent nominations from students (Appendix C and D).

At the beginning each semester, students often bemoan the necessity of an economics class. “I don’t know what this has to do with my major,” is a common refrain. These comments spur me to work with students throughout the semester, to help them understand the ways in which economics is applicable to their chosen career, and every aspect of their lives. I know my efforts have been successful when these same students register for my upper level classes again and again. The thought that I have made things relevant enough for them to want to come back to me to learn more further motivates me to reach out to students and bring economics into their everyday lives.

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<sup>1</sup> For graduate courses I would focus on helping students gain the technical skills necessary to understand, critique, and extend published academic work.