

Teaching Philosophy (Serban Ranca)

I believe learning is a form of intellectual enlightenment and at the same time a quest for the truth. My objectives as an instructor are both to provide students knowledge on the concepts of Economics as well as to help them better understand the real world phenomena using the skills they acquire.

My teaching style is based on the obvious but important fact that students assimilate information easier if they like the subject. I use several methods to keep their interest alive while the course progresses. First, I am strongly in favor of providing as many real world examples as possible to illustrate the concepts. This way, the students are aware of the concrete implications of the economic models and it also makes learning more enjoyable. Second, I integrate active learning in my teaching, for instance through student interaction via collaboration (group work) and through case studies analyses. Related to this, I encourage students to make short extra credit presentations in the classroom on the course-related topics of their interest. I consider presentation skills are very valuable in the perspective of business or academic careers. Also, I am flexible in terms of the content covered depending on the students' academic backgrounds. I feel that acquiring new instructional skills and enhancing the current ones is a long-term process and there is always a possibility of improving. Therefore, I am constantly working on my teaching to better accommodate the students' educational goals and I am open to suggestions both from my students and from my colleagues.

I feel my role to facilitate learning goes beyond the classroom. For me mentoring is very important. My professional¹ experience with guiding students' projects has made me realize how much teaching and research are connected. I am happy to see the students learning how to achieve their goals and the excitement they have when successfully completing their research. This is even better when their hard work and passion is recognized by honor theses or other distinctions.

I am a firm believer in integrating teaching and recent research findings. The students are the future of the society and they need to have an up-to-date perspective on the results of economists' work. For instance, talking about the Open Source software and its economic implications on markets and on our day-to-day lives feels natural when lecturing on externalities and public goods. Moreover, the discussion on innovative business strategies can be enriched through a presentation of two-sided markets such as software, videogames or the media, where we observe cross-market network externalities.

¹ This opportunity to mentor is offered through UNC's Office of Undergraduate Research

In terms of class organization, there are a few things I emphasize. I remind the students the big picture as we progress. In this respect, I state the topic of the day, the specific objectives to be achieved and how the topic relates to the previous material. Moreover, I am available outside the classroom and regular office hours when students need help with understanding the material and I organize review sessions to help them better prepare for exams. Also, the use of PowerPoint slides allows me to illustrate the concepts and make the lectures more enjoyable for students.

In the long run, I see myself involved in teaching and focusing on better addressing each student's objectives and on enhancing my educational skills both through classroom experience and by attending professional teaching workshops and events.