

My experience as a student forms the foundation of my teaching philosophy. I understand the need for a certain degree of self-sufficiency in learning and hope to endow my students with this mindset. Comprehending new material is a responsibility that falls on both the teacher and student, and it is my duty as a teacher to delegate this responsibility in a manner such that the student eventually takes ownership over his or her education. Similarly, each student has a duty to invest time and effort in this responsibility in order to succeed in the classroom and beyond. In what follows, I outline the following three components of my teaching philosophy as set within the framework discussed above: (1) goals for student learning; (2) teaching methods for reaching the goals; and (3) assessment of student and teacher goals.

My primary goal as an instructor of economics is to ensure that each student can learn and think like an economist. This necessitates fostering a deeper understanding of the dual role of economics as a social science and as a methodological approach to problem solving. It requires providing students with a set of critical thinking skills they can use to strengthen their economic intuition. By offering the students an introduction to the basic economic principles underlying each topic, they can hone their economic intuition for use on more complex problems. I encourage the students to use this intuition in their personal and professional lives in an effort to engender a sense of ownership over the course material and drive them to find extensions of the material we might not cover in class. To strengthen this sense of ownership, I incorporate new topics into my courses by way of student suggestions. This confirms my respect for their ideas and reinforces the notion that each student must put in time and effort if they want to learn new material, just as I will work hard to incorporate the new material into the course.

Another major goal I have for student learning is to ensure that each student can identify and/or develop his or her distinctive learning style. I make use of a variety of teaching methods and tools from visually conveying economic concepts on a whiteboard to providing interactive, dynamic presentations using various technological resources. I also use hybrid textbooks to offer the students different perspectives on the same material in an effort to capture the variety of learning styles that exist. For example, I incorporate supply and demand chapters from three different textbooks into one textbook, yet present the material based on my own experience. Although I cannot guarantee that the students look at any one of these chapters, with four presentations in total a curious student is more likely to find one that is intuitively appealing to him or her. These additional chapters encourage the students to search for knowledge on their own with a slight nudge from me.

Flexibility is an important aspect of my teaching methods. I value student criticisms about my courses and encourage each student to make suggestions, anonymously or not, about course improvements. Through this process I learned a lot about my strengths and flaws as a teacher, and continually strive to engage my students and make economics fun for them. Not only does this evolutionary process create a comfortable environment for students to express their ideas and see them incorporated into the course, it instills a sense of confidence in the students that they can carry forward to other courses and beyond.

To further assess the students and myself, I offer individual and group homework assignments; facilitate in-class group assignments; make available electronic copies of exams with answer keys; spend a full lecture reviewing each exam; and informally ask students to submit written answers to questions posed in class. To gauge student comprehension of course material, I consistently remind the students of my office hours and encourage them to approach me with any problems they are having with the course. Furthermore, I regularly provide the students with individual and group feedback thus allowing them to focus on areas that need the most attention. Using the formal course evaluations together with the informal course criticisms, I reflect on my role as a teacher and monitor my success in preparing students to think beyond the course. After all, a large part of student comprehension depends on my ability to successfully deliver the material.

The goals, teaching methods, and assessment techniques presented above are the key elements of my teaching philosophy. The more I encourage students to take an active role in learning, the more interested they become in the material and the better they perform on assignments and exams. If students lack a basic understanding of the principles of any subject, they risk not only misunderstanding the material in other courses but also suffering in non-academic endeavors. It is part of my duty as a teacher to minimize this risk.