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Teaching Philosophy

It is easy enough to say that one loves to teach, but in my view what is truly important is what one does to help students learn and develop the skills that they will need to become successful workers, citizens and lifelong learners. To this end, I consider my role as a teacher not only to help students learn and appreciate the many fundamental and useful insights that economics provides but also to help them bolster their critical thinking and analytical problem solving skills. In fact, these two goals go hand in hand. When students are encouraged to develop these multidimensional skills, they learn much more than by simply memorizing concepts. More significantly, they become equipped with reasoning skills that will make them more effective in all aspects of their lives.

In terms of specifics, before each class I spend a lot of time preparing the course material so that I can best articulate the ideas and present the concepts in a clear and systematic manner. At the start of each class I provide my students with an outline of the lecture to allow them to appreciate the big picture of what they are about to learn. This introduction focuses on several questions. What is the main question/issue/topic that will be addressed today? Why should we care about it? What economic concepts are important for today's class? Students learn better and have a more positive experience when the class ambiance is pleasant and welcoming. Thus, I always strive to create an environment in which students feel valued and respected. In addition to being an approachable instructor, I hold review sessions and extra office hours before exams to reinforce that I dearly care about my students' learning. I also establish very clear requirements and expectations about the course at the beginning of the class term through a well-designed syllabus that helps students know the rules are and what is expected of them.

Students learn and retain more information if the course material is presented in an interactive manner and the class contains many real world examples. Accordingly, I use various in-class activities to promote students' participation. For example, students are given a short article that relates the economic concept we discussed in class to a real life experience and are asked to analyze it in the context of what we have learned in class. Students are more receptive to learning things apply directly to their lives. It is also important to provide students with incentives such as occasional bonus points for completing in-class activities.

I always strive to provide frequent feedback to my students. In the intensive summer and winter courses, I administer practice quizzes at every class meeting. Students are expected to solve questions on their own before we discuss them in class. My practice quizzes not only test students' understanding of the main concepts but also include two or three very challenging questions to encourage them to think critically at a more demanding level. Moreover, these quizzes allow me to monitor the effectiveness of my lectures. I review any concepts with which a large number of students seem to have difficulty.

There is always much to learn not only for students but for their instructors as well. Thus, I constantly strive to improve my teaching by working with different techniques and soliciting feedback from students. Successful and effective teaching requires passion, perseverance, and a commitment to lifelong learning. Like the excellent and visionary teachers who encouraged me to pursue my dreams and helped me to acquire the skills necessary to accomplish them, I consider it to be a great privilege and opportunity to play a key role in shaping the future of my students.