

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Through my economics teaching experience in university, I've developed teaching skills to make the learning of economics interesting and useful, and to improve the learning outcomes of students. I've also come up with different techniques to improve learning outcomes of students with different backgrounds. In the next few paragraphs I'd like to present to you my teaching practices that A) get students engaged and raise their interests; B) improve their learning outcomes for the course; C) improve students' learning outcomes for their better future.

A) Get students engaged and raise their interests

I frequently relate theories in class to real economies and real daily life experience for my audience. Economic theories in principle and intermediate level courses are very simplified models and I always show my audience in a brief way how similar to and also how different they are from the reality and what they can expect if they go further in economics with advanced mathematical tools and skills.

For example, in microeconomics, after solving a firm's profit maximization problem, I give real world examples to show how a firm's cost includes more items and how prices and demands may look different in real world. I give students a lead of how the concept learned just now could be applied to this more sophisticated example when they are equipped with advanced mathematical tools. Students are more engaged in such learning and thinking process and develop better critical thinking capabilities. In one case, students even elaborated on my sophisticated example and proposed a firm's problem adding one more assumption that they felt realistic. I only need to give a very brief hint and they said they've got the clue even though they haven't learned the mathematical methods that's needed in the procedure.

I encourage students to know more about our economy, our Fed and the rest of the world. In Principles of Macroeconomics I frequently direct the class to online pages showing interesting economic data, statistics and stories, including Wikipedia, Google search results and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

My teaching practices described in part B are also helpful in getting students engaged. I'll elaborate in the next section. Here some other tricks worth mention include: give students a little push, such as a test or a quiz, interact with them, ask them questions, look into their eyes, etc.

B) Improve students' learning outcomes for the course

This is a task to deliver contents in an understandable way.

1) I present each topic from the very beginning and sometimes even from things that look like from primary school. I also manage my time so that this way of teaching does not make me fall behind the schedule. Many times, this practice (e.g. when drawing a graph start by showing how to construct the first 3 individual dots) saves me time because students feel much clearer and thus it ensures a smoother progress to the next section.

2) I am adaptive to the audience. It is especially key in college teaching where students have different backgrounds. I have huge patience and show the students the very details and many times I repeat it to make sure 99% of the students understand. For numerical examples, I go through every procedure on the board and I always keep it in mind that many students don't have enough skills in math and have forgot many common algebra rules.

I've accumulated enough experience to know common misunderstandings of economics materials, where an average college student's weakness is, and I can read their face. I utilize numerical examples, graphs and stories to explain problems in alternative ways to make it more understandable. In the meantime many students have learned how to apply theories to real world cases during the process.

3) I designed a creative program to keep students engaged and improve effectively. I asked students to form study groups and each group has to have one tutor-role student and 1 to 4 learning members. I give quizzes for every three chapters to test their effectiveness. I designed a reward-penalty scheme so

that the tutor-role student's score is affected by learning members' grades of his/her group, and the tutor will get more rewards than the learning member.

There are several advantages of this design. The scheme ensures that: students with good grades are willing and eager to help others in their group. Learning members have more incentives to improve because they don't want to harm their friendship with the tutor, let alone their own grade. The study process is also very effective because it's tailored for the learning members and the group can study in flexible time slots. I also give specific instructions on which chapters and questions they should focus on so they study it together better.

This program is proven effective. In my first trial to implement it, the average exam score of my class increased by 10 points from the exam before I announced the program to the exam that come after the first phase of the program. As a comparison, the two tests had the same number of questions, difficulty and covered 6 and 5 chapters respectively, and other sessions in my department didn't see significant grade increase during the same time.

4) I emphasize the importance of relating different chapters together organically. This is especially helpful when different chapters have similar variables but different models that the results seem conflicting. For instance, when I teach an industry's long run supply in micro (which is a horizontal line in graph) I tell students in macro the long run supply is vertical and I explain why.

5) I encourage in class practice. In some lectures where solving numerical problems is a major learning goal, I print out practice questions and give them to students and solve it with them together. For instance in the micro chapter of firm's revenue calculation, especially for the concept of 'marginal revenue', the in class practice significantly increase students' understanding of the contents. Even though the lecture notes already have the practices, I can tell that without me giving the printouts to students individually, many students just look at the screen/blackboard and don't try to solve it themselves and subsequently forget the procedure easily.

6) I am detail oriented.

I edit lecturer notes provided by publishers carefully to include contents I feel necessary or need more emphasis. I pay attention to the smallest details in several ways. First, I add details for problems and cases where I feel students may not get it if some steps are not shown explicitly. Secondly, I even found some minor errors in the publisher slides. For example, in the graph of cost curves, some publisher draw curves without checking the condition that 'the MC should intersect ATC at its lowest point'. This is especially common in later chapters where cost curves are not the main topic but need to be shown. I have great computer skills to redraw them beautifully. Thirdly, in principle level courses our school adopt online homework platform, and I found that in some chapters the questions may not include all contents that's covered, or the structure/phrase of the question may miss a specific concept or tricky point. I then make up questions and assign additional homework to include these missing tasks. Fourthly, in some test bank questions, I edit the answer choices so that the disturbances are trickier, or I add incorrect choices that I know students are prone to make.

C) Improve students' learning outcomes for their better future

I often extend a topic to include its possible applications in business, public policy, politics and other real world cases. In the meantime I encourage them to think critically and often encourage them to find both pros and cons of a discussion. With my expertise in finance and business (I am certified PRM, and pending CFA) I make it a habit for students to think about the difference between the current problem in the lecture and a potential real world problem and how the practices differ. I also talk more than required to give students a picture of how it may look like in higher-level courses. Some of these are not tested, but they help students for both the short run of their course grade and long run for their future.

As a summary, many of my teaching practices in the above sections are complimenting each other to achieve my goals.