

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

I. General Teaching Philosophy

Teaching economics and finance has been one of the most fulfilling and enriching experiences of my life. It has given me the opportunity to both grow in my fundamental understanding of both disciplines and to pass along that knowledge through enthusiastic and rewarding interactions with students. I believe that the role of a good professor is to both demonstrate the real-world relevance of the subject matter to the students, and to help prepare them to be informed and responsible citizens in the new global economy. Conveying enthusiasm about the subject matter, making it clear to the students what is expected of them, demonstrating the relevance of the subject matter, encouraging interaction in and out of the classroom, integrating Christian faith meaningfully are all parts of my effort to make the learning experience as rewarding as possible for the students.

Conveying Enthusiasm

It is crucial that a professor be passionate about what they are teaching. It is difficult to expect students to take an interest in learning if the professor fails to convey any sense of enthusiasm or excitement about the subject matter. I have always found each new day of teaching an enjoyable experience and very much look forward to the personal fulfillment that teaching economics and finance can bring. Students at Michigan and here at NWC have told me how infectious my enthusiasm has been and how enjoyable I made the class by expressing my interest in the topics being discussed. I believe it is this type of enthusiasm that makes the classroom most conducive to learning for the students.

Clarity of Student Expectations

In a pragmatic sense, I am aware that students are often primarily focused what they need to do to get a certain grade for the class. Therefore, it is essential that students fully understand what is expected of them. To achieve that goal, I make the grading system as transparent, objective, and detailed as possible. I provide one practice exam for each exam that I give. I return all assignments and exams in a timely manner. And I give students tentative letter grades periodically

based on their cumulative performance up to that point. This helps students assess their standing as they progress through the course and adjust their study plans accordingly.

Demonstrating Relevance

Few students will truly internalize class materials if they view them as purely abstract concepts and not relevant to the real world. Often, for expository convenience, we use overly simplistic examples (“Stock A” or “Good 1 and Good 2” with “representative agents”) to explain abstract economic and financial concepts. As a result, some students may miss the relevance of those concepts. To counter this, I often follow the introduction of a new concept or an expository example with an application to something the students are familiar with in their everyday lives. I often bring in news articles and demonstrate how the concepts we are discussing can help explain what is happening in the market. Ultimately, I intend for students to walk away from my class with a sense that they can use the concepts presented to better understand the world they live in or make better financial decisions.

Student Interaction

Interacting with students is a two-way street and is mutually beneficial. On the hand, the more involved the students are in participating in the learning process beyond simply taking down notes and memorizing definitions, the more likely they will remember and internalize the concepts being presented. To this end, I attempt to create an atmosphere conducive to discussion and interaction in and out of the classroom. Whenever appropriate, I use group projects to encourage more peer learning in and out of the classroom. In the last two years, in addition to increasing the usage of in-class discussion, I also found increased interactions with students in written forms to be particularly effective.

On the other hand, I also benefit hugely from talking with students. Even though students are not seasoned practitioners or experienced researchers, from time to time, they ask really thought-provoking questions and make comments that either enrich my understanding of human beings and the American society or help me become a better teacher.

Integration of Faith and Learning

I believe rationality is the great gift from God to human beings. Therefore, I believe we should primarily resort to reasoning rather than emotion or personal

experience when integrating faith and learning at a Christian college. Through my integrative exercises, I strive to show my students coherence as well as tensions of Christian theology and fundamental principles of economics and finance. I am also very intentional at the decoupling of core Christian doctrines and ideology and groupthink. I am very grateful for the opportunity to push students to think secular economics and finance in a more holistic way, and ask larger-than-life questions such as the meaning of justice and fairness and the extent of human rationality.

Commitment to the Students

Ultimately, the primary goal of any teacher should be the passing on of knowledge to the students. This objective requires a commitment from both the students and the teacher. Coming to class fully prepared, being enthusiastic about what is being taught, replying emails on a timely basis, and conveying to the students through my words and actions that it matters to me that the students are learning and understanding the material are all part of this commitment to the students. To this end, a teacher should always exhibit patience and understanding if the students do not fully understand a concept the first time. I treat questions and comments with respect because I know an inquisitive student is a student that wants to learn. As professors, we should strive to foster this type of inquisitiveness, not dissuade it through apparent disinterest in what the students have to offer.

II. Teaching Introductory Courses

Even at the introductory level, I push students to *think*, not just go through the motions and memorize a few things. In many ways, teaching introductory courses are the most challenging for me. One challenge is that students in introductory courses are not always ready for college learning. To help make a smooth transition for every student, I make sure my slides are all clearly laid-out, distribute a lot of handouts to facilitate note-taking, give frequent homework assignments, and urge students to fully utilize peer tutors. Another challenge is the great heterogeneity in students' mathematical skills and prior exposure to finance and/or economics. To reach out to all students, I minimize the usage of "math" (calculus and algebra) in intro classes. Instead, I focus on verbal reasoning and graphical analysis.

I believe the intuitive understanding should be the real focus at the introductory level. I incorporated a personal finance book (*the Index Card*) and assigned a lot of essays and short videos from the outlets such as *the Economist*

and *the Wall Street Journal* to make contents “relevant” to students. The goal I strive to reach is that most students can apply economic reasoning and basic finance principles to make sense of what are happening all around them by the end of the class.

III. Teaching Upper-level Courses

In upper level courses, it is important that they are exposed to rigorous quantitative analysis that will be useful in their careers. It is also important that they expand their economics/finance vocabulary and understand more deeply the logic behind various methods and techniques. I do, however, realize that students differ in their math skills. So I still emphasize understanding how to interpret and apply theoretical results more than understanding mathematical derivations and proofs. I also use case studies and group projects as ways to facilitate experiential learning. Ultimately, the goal of my upper-level courses is that students can *think* like an economist.

The two facets of the ivory tower—research and teaching—have become increasingly separate. While I acknowledge that these two roles of a tenure-track faculty member may not require exactly the same skills, I reject this dichotomy. I believe in the value of excellent teaching. And I am committed to be a dedicated teacher, giving students a whole education for their whole life. My development as a teacher is, and always will be, an ongoing process. I look forward to learning from my colleagues and sometimes students to improve the effectiveness of my teaching in the coming years.