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Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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"A better-informed citizenry makes for better economic policymaking."
— Frederic Mishkin

One of the most important economic concepts is that of the tradeoff. Every shift in policy will produce a variety of effects that ripple through the economy, some of which may be undesirable. Learning how to identify where these effects will show up and understanding the mechanisms that produce them are, in my opinion, among the most crucial aspects of economic literacy.

To this end, I prioritize clarity, repetition, and open-ended Socratic-style methods. In terms of clarity, I aim to explain each concept without recourse to technical terminology, even if some baseline technical knowledge is assumed as a prerequisite for the course. I attempt to introduce new concepts in a manner that would be understandable to an audience of non-specialists. The clarity of my instruction is a recurrent theme in my evaluations. Repetition is also important, especially in terms of common causal chains in economics, such as the relations between inflation, interest rates, investment, and economic activity. Repeatedly walking students through the logic of the interrelations of variables like these helps students build intuition that enables them to think through downstream effects. I also consistently repeat concepts from previous lectures so as to effectively build a robust understanding of the course content. Open-ended questions directed to the class enable students to test their reasoning skills and give me the opportunity to sharpen and refine them.

Like every economics instructor, I use models to discipline students' reasoning. However, I like to trace effects of policy, and/or economic phenomena more generally, across multiple models, which enables students to see the extent to which various components of the economy are interconnected. Furthermore, I apply these models to central debates in the political realm to keep students engaged and to show them how modeling can be applied to make sense of current events.

It is a priority for me to have a classroom environment where everyone feels comfortable to ask clarifying questions without undue anxiety. For this reason, at the start of each quarter, I have students go around and introduce themselves and provide some light anecdotes about themselves. In my experience, this has a considerable effect on participation throughout the quarter in terms of the number of people who speak up in class. I make a concentrated effort to respond to every student's question with the utmost dignity and charity so as to maximize the comfort other students have in also asking questions or participating.

When it comes to assessing students, I provide students with a large variety of practice materials to help them prepare for exams. I also provide detailed solutions to the practice materials, along with guides for the more complicated concepts. I aim to assess understanding of the material. Testing rote memorization is an element of assessments, but I place the greatest weight on assessing whether students can explain, verbally, how and why a particular economic scenario will unfold. I tend to gear study guides and practice materials toward questions involving the most important policy issues in order to both motivate students and give them a baseline understanding that will stick long after they have taken my course.

Over the course of my PhD, I have had extensive opportunities to develop my teaching skills. I was an independent instructor for eight sections, one of which had an enrollment of 180 students. I have a mean evaluation of 4.6/5.0 across a total of 11 evaluated courses. Consequently, I was awarded the 2026 Steven Langton Teaching Award, which is given by the economics department in recognition of teaching excellence by a graduate student. My experience has taught me that among the most important aspects of teaching are keeping the class involved by asking them questions that are interesting and relevant and motivating students by praising them for well-thought-out responses in class.

My aim in teaching economics is to ingrain fundamental relationships between economic objects into students' core memory and, furthermore, to condition them to ask themselves, "What possible consequences might this policy have that I haven't considered?" There is no substitute for clarity (as one is less likely to recall a concept the less clear it is), nor is there any substitute for repetition in ensuring student acquisition of the material. Open-ended questions, for the most part, provide instructors with an indicator for how well they've satisfied those two criteria in their teaching.