Teaching Statement

Paul Eliason

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My Teaching Philosophy

My philosophy on teaching can be summed up by the saying, “The mind is not a vessel that needs filling but wood that needs igniting.” My experience is that when economics is taught properly it does just that. This is because the true value of learning economics is not found in a list of facts about the economy. Rather, the true value is that it provides a framework, or tool set, for critical analysis and decision making that will enhance the student’s ability to effectively and creatively solve problems. This framework can completely change how students view the world, as it did for me. However, learning economics can be challenging and students can benefit from an effective teacher, or guide. My aspiration is to be that guide and my experience, expertise, and skills qualify me to do so.

Learning Objectives

My experience suggests that one should always begin by providing clear and concise learning objectives. Defining clear objectives for entire courses and for individual sessions helps students know where to focus their attention and see how individual concepts fit into the larger context. In recitation sections as a TA for an economic statistics class I found that it was helpful to preface each practice problem by tying it back to the learning objective that the problem was intended to teach. Well constructed objectives provide a map for students that helps them stay motivated and directed in their learning efforts.

Teaching Approach

Once objectives are established, learning is best facilitated through courses that challenge students both in and outside of the classroom. In the classroom, the perfect teaching method is specific to the material and learning style of students in each situation. That being said, two methods that I have found to be effective are interactive lectures, which are useful when teaching fundamental principles, and the case method, which can deepen the student’s ability to apply these principles in context.

Classroom learning can be most effective when it consist of interactions between teacher and learner relying on a mixture of presentation techniques and media. Earlier this year in a recitation session for Managerial Economics I was presented with the challenge of teaching 120 MBA students coming from different cultural, academic, and professional backgrounds. I found that a key to helping this diverse group internalize and retain principles was repetition—that is to say, reiterating the same principle in different forms and at increasingly profound levels. Doing this layers and reinforces understanding and, as each pass presents a different take on the principle, it is more likely to offer something to a diverse set of students with diverse learning styles. A good first step to teaching an economic principle is to anchor the principle to students’ lived experiences through real world examples that they can relate to and care about. Putting principles into the cognitive framework of students’ experiences helps them internalize it, remember it, and care. With this anchor in place, the next layer is to introduce a slightly more rigorous framework around the principle using graphical representations. I find this slows things down and help solidify concepts in students' minds. The third layer is then to add extensions to this foundation, helping students see the applicability of the principle to a expansive array of situations. When the situation is right, these extensions should include the use of cases.
As a TA for *Biotech and Pharmaceutical Strategy* in the Fuqua School of Business, I gained experience with the use of the case method. One of my roles was to help teams of MBA students understand and highlight the economic principles in case studies that they prepared. The case method ignites students minds by putting students in the place of real-world decision makers. Case discussions challenge students to apply course principles in context, while exposing them to institutional details. It has the added benefit of drawing on the diverse experiences and view points of students with different backgrounds. I saw that weaving cases into a course curriculum was a powerful way to reinforce concepts, promote collaboration, and hone students' analytic and decision making skills, in addition to keeping them engaged and interested. While I think the case method can be incorporated into most courses to some degree, it will sometimes play a smaller role.

The learning experience does not end in the classroom. My own experience as a student of economics is that problem sets and writing assignments were extremely valuable to learning. I will encourage students to collaborate on problem sets. This interaction can facilitate their learning experience as they help and teach each other while developing the skills to effectively work in teams. Additionally, I believe that writing assignments should be used in all classes, to some extent. I have found that the process of writing disciplines my thoughts and helps me identify fallacies in my own reasoning, solve problems, and make connections that I would otherwise miss.

**Mentoring**

Mentoring is an important extension to teaching that I am excited about. Mentoring can help students push their limits and fulfill their potential. It also provides a link between my teaching responsibilities and my research responsibilities. I particularly look forward to helping students develop their own research agendas. My experience as a mentor to new incoming Ph.D. students and directing a team of RAs at Duke has taught me how rewarding it is to share my experience and knowledge on a one-on-one basis and help others discover their love of research.

**Going Forward**

I look forward to building on my foundation as a teacher and a mentor in the future. I am qualified to teach a variety of courses at the undergraduate and graduate level. In addition to microeconomics and industrial organization, I can teach classes about health care policy, strategy and economics.

As a TA for the course *Biotech and Pharmaceutical Strategy* I have experience with organizing and executing a course focused on the pharmaceutical industry and the life cycle of drugs from exploration and innovation to generic entry and competition. Additionally, I am very interested in teaching courses about health care policy and strategy. My research demonstrates my interest in these areas. I am fascinated by the trade-offs between quality and costs that permeate the health care system, the complicated relationships between health care providers and payers (both public and private), and the resulting antitrust issues. Exploring these issues with my own students will be extremely valuable.