

# Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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Teaching is the way I express, communicate, and learn. I cannot do it by formulas. To teach effectively, I plan, I assess, I experiment, and I change. I make the class a positive experience and create opportunities for students to participate in different ways. I become a student to learn with my students and keep an open dialogue with successful educators.

When I prepare a course, I devote a great deal of time to planning. If I am teaching the class for the first time, I look at what other teachers include in similar courses. Then, based on what I know (or what I can learn) about my prospective students, I select the content and define clear learning objectives. If I teach a course I have taught before, I first review my students' feedback and a brief class journal I keep. Based on what worked and what did not, I reassess and make changes. I pattern my lectures, so I present a new central concept no more frequently than every twenty to twenty-five minutes. I use the rest of the time to reinforce ideas by discussing exercises and examples and occasionally performing short demonstrations. This does not mean I am not flexible but instead means that I must have a clear plan for the lecture to depart from it effectively when the classroom dynamic requires it.

I enter the classroom about ten minutes before class starts to answer questions or have an informal chat with my students. In this way, I get a firsthand impression of their mood, expectations, and feelings. I begin by sketching a roadmap of the lecture, stating the objectives to be achieved by the end. Then, I explain why the content is relevant and how it fits with previous and future discussions. I like to build an informal and friendly atmosphere so my students feel safe and encouraged to participate. To keep students alert, I use voice inflections, ask questions, and ask for questions. I move around the room, making eye contact with them. I pay attention to their body language to gauge how they respond to my teaching, and I pace my lecture accordingly. I finish my presentation summarizing the main points and laying the groundwork for the next class.

I like to bring elements of my background, culture, and personal experience into the classroom. I find that letting my students know me helps to build trust and encourages participation. I tell them, for example, how difficult I found some concepts I now teach, back when I was an undergraduate student in Argentina, or things that happened to me in my first few years as a graduate student in the United States. I also tell them about my adventures teaching economics in China and things I discovered while traveling or working in South America. I slip these brief stories in class, frequently using humor. Students identify with these anecdotes, and they seem to remember the

class discussion better when I include them. At the same time, these stories allow me to create some intimacy even in classes with four hundred students.

My teaching approach requires time. A consistent comment in my teaching evaluations is that I am willing to take whatever time is needed to help students do well in the class. I strive to be available to students outside the classroom so they can communicate with me in the way they feel most comfortable. I welcome interactions during office hours, review sessions, and emails. I invite students to make appointments to visit me or to stop by during my office hours, especially during the first few weeks of classes. In this way, I learn about my students early on in the semester. At the same time, they feel more confident visiting me later in the semester when they need help with the material. I also find that offering review sessions outside of the regular class time, for instance, in the evenings before exams, promotes participation and helps students relax and do better in tests. I also take the time to respond to all my students' emails at least once a day. Some students who rarely participate in class articulate relevant questions in their emails, which tells me which ideas I need to revisit or reinforce in class.

Students and colleagues also comment that I show genuine enthusiasm about what I teach, but the excitement they observe when I *teach* my students comes from the fact that I am actually *learning* with them. Regardless, for example, of how many times I have explained the possibilities of production curve or the Nash equilibrium over the years, I always approach class preparation with a new set of eyes. I explore new sources and examples, I try new exercises, and I use new technologies. I also thrive on teaching new topics. At Stony Brook University alone, I proposed, developed, and instructed new courses on experimental economics and political economy. For experimental economics, I built a course around in-class experiments and demonstrations. This gave my students hands-on experience: they learned about theoretical predictions, participated in weekly experiments, and analyzed their results using statistical tools.

I have also learned from my colleagues and faculty. From time to time, I like to visit classes taught by successful instructors (most of them recommended by my students), and I maintain regular conversations with faculty about teaching strategies. I stay up to date with technological and pedagogical advances by participating in teaching workshops. And, to give back, I share what I have learned about teaching by presenting in academic conferences and meetings, mentoring undergraduate TA's and graduate lecturers, and of course, sharing my teaching materials.

I have not found a formula to teach, nor do I think there is one for me. My teaching approach and techniques continually evolve as I learn from my students and colleagues. Over the years, a constant in my method has been the considerable amount of time and effort I devote to class preparation and interacting with students and colleagues and, of course, how much I enjoy teaching. Thinking back on my experiences, I can say why: I am passionate about teaching because I am passionate about learning.