Statement of Teaching Philosophy  
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Economics is the study of how individuals, firms, and governments allocate time, money, property, information, and other resources. As a social science, economics is heavily concerned with analyzing the decision-making behavior of both individuals and groups. Studying economics fosters in students an ability to see the world through a more objective and logical perspective that allows them to make better, more informed decisions in their own everyday lives, whether they are in the voting booth, grocery store, at work, at home, or elsewhere. My class is, for many students, the only economics course they will ever take, so my chief concern as an instructor is to ensure that they leave with the ability to apply what they have learned to their own lives and the world around them.

The environment I try to create in the classroom is one where we are all working together toward a common goal. Such an environment motivates students to take a more active role in the course. It is important for me, therefore, to strike a good balance between authority and approachability—the two need not be mutually exclusive. I achieve this through the development of a sense of mutual respect between myself and my students. I am always sure to learn the names of my students, which lets them know that I see them as individuals. It also makes them aware that I know who they are, which has a positive effect on their behavior and participation in the classroom. I arrive early to each class because it gives me an opportunity to get to know my students better and helps to stimulate discussion after class has begun. I repeatedly encourage students to come to my office hours, and I make it clear that I am more than willing to meet with them at other times, as well. I also make a habit of posting the results of students’ assignments and exams online as quickly as possible, as they appreciate the instant feedback. Most importantly, I constantly remind myself that I was once an undergraduate student, too, and will often speak to students about my own experiences and relay to them what I gained from college and what I would have done differently if I could go back. All of these practices help to build mutual respect and create a constructive, active classroom environment.

The key to making economic theory exciting for students to learn is to repeatedly demonstrate how it can be applied to the real world. Students need to be able to relate to the examples that are presented in class, and I always keep this in mind when preparing my lectures. The examples that I implement in my lectures come from the news, popular music, sports, the collegiate experience, and elsewhere to show students the variety of ways economics can be applied to areas that both interest and affect them. I occasionally utilize short television or movie clips to emphasize my points, and will often ask students to come up with their own examples in class for us to discuss as a group. Another way I demonstrate economic theory is through group activities and games that simulate real economies. It is more effective for students to practice the application of economic theory than it is for them to memorize their lecture notes and chapters in their textbooks, so I provide my students with plenty of materials to work on in groups during class and on the course website for them to work on at home by themselves.

I became an economist because I want to contribute knowledge to society that will improve and enrich people’s lives. Although I am able to make minor contributions to the general welfare of society through my research, it is through teaching that I am able to make a positive and significant impact at the individual level. The personal relationships I have developed with my students over the course of my teaching career—and witnessing the part I have played in their personal growth and progress—serve to constantly reinforce my motivation to be an excellent instructor.