

Joseph Calhoun
Statement of Teaching Philosophy

I consider teaching to be an honor and privilege that I take very seriously. For many students, my class is the only economics class they will take in their lifetime. Hence, the material I teach and the way I teach it takes on added importance. There is no chance for a makeup.

My philosophy can be summarized as follows:

Tell me and I may forget
Show me and I may remember
Involve me and I understand

I do not develop lectures nor do I lecture in class. I bring to class a variety of learning and assessment tools that engage students in economic concepts. My main tools are a classroom response system (i.e. “clickers”), short writing assignments, demonstrations, video clips, and creation of classroom discussion. By bringing a diversity of stimuli to the classroom, I strive to keep class interesting and lively as well as appeal to a wide variety of learning styles.

A positive classroom experience starts with my preparation, attitude, and behavior. Preparation is the key to any rewarding and productive class period. Having a positive attitude and being enthusiastic adds life and meaning to the material. As I constantly state, economics is really about explaining behavior so the discussion should be as intuitively appealing as possible.

I attempt to create an informal and friendly class environment. I play an upbeat song that is scheduled to end precisely at the beginning of class. This is the students cue to settle down and get started. Each class commences with the objectives of the class time and how that discussion fits together with previous and future discussions. I attempt to be as dynamic as possible without drawing undue attention to myself or taking focus away from the topic. Voice inflections, physically moving around the room, and asking questions are ways I keep students’ interest during class.

I encourage students to engage in what I call active learning. Doing problems is often a better way to learn than reading the book, reviewing notes, and sitting in class. I choose textbooks that offer supplemental materials to give students an opportunity to do as much as they can. When appropriate I create exercises for students to work, and I use a web page to facilitate communication and to provide supplemental material.

Being available for students is important. Many times students just need to voice their concerns or frustrations. Answering questions individually can be more powerful than answering in class.