

Teaching Philosophy

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Economics is a powerful science – and a fun one to study – because it provides understanding about how the world around us works. My teaching philosophy places a strong emphasis on the application of the economic way of thinking to novel situations and challenges students to consistently apply economics to all aspects of their daily lives. I emphasize the importance of identifying the mechanisms and institutions that facilitate people’s actions to achieve their chosen ends. Students should be able to walk away from an economics course grasping the fundamental insights about rational decision makers. One important component of economic education is conveying to students that the discipline rests on a relatively few, plausible concepts and simple analytical tools that can be applied to virtually every instance of human decision-making in a way that generates relevant insights.

I rely on several different pedagogical approaches to communicate these themes. First, I make use of real-world examples extensively. My lectures often incorporate situations and experiences with which my students are familiar or involving subject matter that is of personal or sensational interest to them. Second, I employ several classroom experiments to illustrate economic concepts. Students often better grasped the importance of the double auction, for example, after having actually participated in one and having seen the equilibrium price arise. Third, I find using technology in smart, simple ways, such as interactive power point presentations can enhance economic lessons. Finally, I include examples from movies, television shows, and popular fiction to illustrate unintuitive economic concepts. For instance, I contributed an article to a volume on economic education that uses the story of Johnny Appleseed to discuss Adam Smith’s Invisible Hand. The Princeton Review ranks George Mason University as the nation’s most diverse school, and I enjoyed adopting these approaches into my teaching style to communicate clearly to people from different cultural backgrounds.

I designed and taught two sections of Intermediate Microeconomics during the fall 2008 semester. Here are the results of the two most comprehensive questions, on a scale of 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent):

	Mean		Median		Standard Deviation	
	Sec. 1	Sec. 2	Sec. 1	Sec. 2	Sec. 1	Sec. 2
Overall rating of the teaching	4.96	4.96	5	5	.20	.21
Overall rating of the course	4.85	4.75	5	5	.35	.63

Economics differs from many other disciplines in how it explains the world, and I believe that students benefit from and enjoy the surprise of learning the economic way of thinking. Too often, economics is seen as unrealistic, a strictly academic enterprise, or consisting of concepts only applicable to the stock market. The core of my teaching philosophy is to use novel and interesting real world examples to teach students how to apply economics to all aspects of human action.