

TEACHING STATEMENT

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Teaching is one of the most difficult professions an individual can pursue and carries with it a responsibility to one's students, and through them, to society as a whole. It's hard to measure the impact of an effective teacher. Everyone I know can look back over their education and point to a few special teachers who profoundly affected their careers. Such teachers are hard to come by. They need to understand the materials inside and out, be a master in managerial skills, and to be a performing artist at the same time. Their goals go beyond imparting knowledge, they seek to inspire students and teach them by example. There are many basic and critical elements in teaching that are important. The first is to be extremely well prepared. My most effective teaching strategy is to tell a really good story. Use many examples, perhaps even some that are contradictory, in order to illustrate a thesis from different angles. To engage students, it is essential to make the subject relevant to them and interesting and to bring out their personal talents and critical thinking skills.

Another aspect of being well-prepared is that the lecture, homework and examinations should be tightly knit together. I believe that each of those elements provides a support column that will help students build a foundation for their understanding. In practice, I found it important to recognize that teaching is a constrained maximization process. Time is limited and students may come into a university with insufficient tools and skills. Hence, it is important to set achievable and feasible goals for both the instructor and students to reach. In a large class this means that an effective instructor should strive to recognize individual strengths and weaknesses for every student. A student's progress should be recognized at every turn, and the gaps in their understanding should be identified and filled through repetitions or practices.

Certain teaching skills require experience to acquire and I feel fortunate to have had the chance to teach as part of my graduate training. I taught two courses - one on the Basic Economic Issues and the other on Environmental Economics. This helped me develop some teaching skills, and I learned firsthand the rigors of class preparation. At times, it feels exhausting both mentally and physically to teach, especially when teaching a course for the first time. I made a number of rookie mistakes. Yet some of my students expressed the view that this was one the best classes that they had taken. I'm not afraid to say that the more I teach the more that I realize what I don't know. I have a passion to learn and to teach. My ultimate goal is to become one of the handful of great teachers who inspire through lucid lectures, and provide a safe and respectful learning environment for every student.

It's clear that for different level courses and different audiences, the emphasis will not be the same. Coming from a science background, one of the most bothersome experiences was to use clickers to vote for answers during the Quantum Mechanics class. That being said, I do highly value the use of modern multimedia technology. I have drawn on my experience in building multiple websites (an undergraduate RA responsibility that I undervalued at the time) and I became proficient with graphic software, and in locating internet resources. Now I take pride in the presentation slides that I use for teaching. I believe the interaction with students doesn't just end with the class period. Students who come to college often are looking for direction in life as well. I'm committed to my students and I want to see all of them succeed.

