

Teaching Statement

*Tell me and I forget, teach me and
I remember, involve me and I learn.*

Benjamin Franklin

This statement by Benjamin Franklin embodies my instructional approach in the classroom. In the five sections that I have taught as an instructor of record, I employed pedagogical techniques that focus on active student engagement. The aim of these techniques is to help students connect economic concepts to what they observe in their everyday life and globally. Studies show that engaging students in the learning process can help improve student motivation, which leads to better long-term learning outcomes such as increased cognitive effort and improved critical thinking skills.¹

As such, three techniques that I have found most successful in encouraging student engagement are: (i) think-pair-share group discussions; (ii) ‘show-me-the-data’ analysis and (iii) incorporating economic research or policy implications of various concepts. For instance, I ask students to download and plot several interest rates including the federal funds rate. We spend time discussing in small groups how these rates behave at different points of the business cycle and the possible implications they have on the students’ future planning and decision-making. Students are usually surprised when they learn how changes in the federal funds rate affect them. This three-pronged approach forms the foundation of my teaching philosophy. I aim to create a stimulating and diverse learning environment where students feel confident and comfortable to participate in class activities. I believe that by using data-driven examples and policy discussions, students are exposed to economics as a tool that can be applied to help understand the world around them and simplify the decisions they will face in life, regardless of the career path they choose.

I further tailor the pedagogical approach and student engagement techniques based on the course being taught, the class level and cultural background. When I taught Principles of Macroeconomics, I utilized a practical approach to help students connect with the material. A common notion among first-year undergraduates is that economic concepts are too abstract and technical. To help change this mindset, I look for everyday examples and stories that would illustrate an economic principle. For example, I have used market data on the supply of and demand for the latest model of iPhones to illustrate the concept of disequilibrium. In higher level courses like Money and Banking and Intermediate Microeconomics, I use students’ majors to select news articles and empirical papers for class discussions at the beginning of the semester. I also incorporate other skills such as plotting and interpreting macroeconomic data in Excel, which would be useful to them after graduation.

Regardless of the class level, I place an emphasis on small group discussions to promote critical thinking and build community. In my experience, small group discussions foster an awareness and respect for differing viewpoints and experiences. As an international student instructor, I embrace diversity of thought and experience in the classroom by introducing examples

¹See Louis Deslauriers et al. (2019). Measuring actual learning versus feeling of learning in response to being actively engaged in the classroom. In: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 116(39), 19251–19257 and Douglas B. Markant et al. (2016). Enhanced Memory as a Common Effect of Active Learning. In: Mind, Brain, and Education, 10(3), 142–152.

from my home country into class discussions and using case studies from other countries with different policy regimes. As a result, students are more willing to share their experiences and learn from each other. Embracing diversity and individuality is an important aspect of the learning process that I try to weave into different parts of each course because of the established link between multicultural pedagogical techniques and the academic outcomes of students.² Furthermore, diverse viewpoints introduce a wealth of perspectives, which can lead to better outcomes when designing policies. If viewpoints are homogeneous, owing to homogeneous backgrounds, possibilities are likely to be overlooked. I believe that as an instructor, I have the responsibility to help students become more informed citizens, both economically and culturally.

I try to cultivate a fun and interactive learning environment. In addition to using several interactive mediums such as Kahoot and showing video clips from *The Economics of The Office*, I incorporate a 3-minute “Economists take on ...” segment, where I summarize an empirical research paper related to the lecture to demonstrate how economists are thinking about and solving real-world issues. Students are focused and intrigued during this portion of the lectures, especially when I talk about my personal research or that of my colleagues or faculty in the department. Introducing students to applied research provides them with additional exposure to economics and reinforces concepts such that they are able to continue the learning process on their own.

I am a firm believer in modeling the results I want to be achieved in the classroom. I make an effort to be open and approachable and take a keen interest in making students feel valued. To this end, after administering a brief survey at the beginning of the semester, I memorize all the names and hobbies of my students and emulate the common practice in our department of collectively addressing our students as economists. I make sure to adopt a flexible schedule to accommodate non-traditional, first-generation as well as part-time students. In addition, I keep track of and reach out to under-performing students to find ways to help them achieve their best. In my experience, having more flexible office hours to meet for one-on-one consultation has helped students improve their performance and set higher goals for themselves. I believe that students perceive my efforts to be genuine as I maintained an average score of 4.8/5 and 4.9/5 on teaching evaluations in the categories “Interest in helping students learn” and “Willingness to help outside of class,” respectively. Adding to Benjamin Franklin’s statement, I believe that involving students at every step of the learning process is central to developing life-long learners.

²See for example, Zirkel, S. (2008). The influence of multicultural educational practices on student outcomes and intergroup relations. *Teachers College Record*, 110(6), 1147-1181.