

# Teaching philosophy

My ideas of an effective teacher are shaped based on my postsecondary education, my own teaching experiences, and my instructors' teaching approaches. My teaching philosophy contains creating interest in learning, preserving the interest by keeping students attentive and focused, and motivating students for learning by explaining how the course materials apply to real world examples.

Before any teaching takes place, the effective instructor should develop a desire for learning in students in the very first lecture. This can create interest in the course among students. Without creating this environment initially, it will be hard to keep students focused during the rest of the lectures. Raising some exciting questions and explaining their practical applications could raise the enthusiasm for knowing. This generated excitement for learning could even set a path for future thinking. One example of such questions is about how patent systems could both boost and hinder the innovation process.

After creating the interest in learning the material, an instructor should strive to maintain this interest throughout the course. If a student's interest fades, no matter how effectively the instructor conveys the course materials, the learning process will not be as significant. One way of preserving the interest is keeping students attentive and focused during lectures. The instructor can ask questions that require students to use the covered material up to that point. Asking questions during lectures could play an important role in maintaining students' attention and communicating that they have to pay attention to the materials. By keeping students focused, the instructor makes them see the connection between the subjects in the lecture and this leads to a deep and proper learning of the materials. For example, I asked whether advertisement is pro-competitive or anti-competitive in my lecture on the perfectly competitive markets in microeconomic theory this term. This question made students to think about the properties of such markets, which were just covered in the lecture.

Usually students raise the question of "When will I ever use the course contents?". If students cannot see the application of what they learn in their course, they will lose their enthusiasm for learning. This issue directly points to one of the important factors in my teaching philosophy, which is explaining how the course contents apply to real world examples. These applications generate motivation for learning and further thinking in students. In the field of economics, illustrating the applications of theories is especially appealing to students. Instructors can provide examples of the applications of the materials during lectures or ask students to provide some applications as their assignments. This approach further provides confidence in students that what they learn is not only for the purpose of getting a mark on their transcript, but it has an actual application. This in turn could create satisfaction from learning and spark their desire for future learning. For example, in my lecture on dynamic pricing strategies in microeconomic theory last term, I explained how amazon.com uses these strategies in its book market.

In summary, I believe that being an effective instructor involves creating interest in learning, keeping students focused to maintain the interest, and motivating students for learning by showing applications of the course materials.

## Teaching experiences

I have been teaching the undergraduate level Microeconomic Theory course for two terms since spring 2009 (class size: 100 students). In both terms, I had the full responsibility for the course delivery, including the course outline, designing lectures, and making midterm and final exams. The objective of this course is familiarizing students with the theory of consumer choice, the theory of the firm, and market structure. I will also teach Introduction to Mathematical Economics in winter 2010. The other parts of my teaching experiences are from my teaching assistantships at both the graduate and undergraduate levels at the University of Waterloo. I have a complete list of these experiences on my Curriculum Vitae.

## Teaching development activities

During my PhD studies my professors have continuously praised my exceptionally strong presentation skills and assessed me as an excellent presenter. These complements gave me the belief that I can also be an excellent teacher. Therefore, I participated in the Certificate in University Teaching (CUT) program in university of Waterloo, and obtained the Certificate in University Teaching. The CUT program requires taking three courses: *Preparation for University Teaching*, *Preparing for an academic career*, and *Teaching Practicum*. The first course requires attending workshops and writing reflective response papers on the applications of the learned materials in the workshops to teaching. I have been teaching an undergraduate course with 100 students since spring 2009 at the University of Waterloo. Two of the workshops, Teaching in the Canadian Classroom and Teaching in large classes, have been really useful in my teaching experiences.

I wrote a teaching dossier and provided a poster for the course *Preparing for an academic career*. For each of these activities, I attended a workshop and a consultation session. Writing the teaching dossier has tremendously helped me in organizing my philosophy for teaching. I presented the poster at the Graduate Student Conference at the University of Waterloo in April 2009. The observer of my presentation, similar to my professors, reported that my poster presentation delivery was polished and professional.

The *Teaching Practicum* provided me the opportunities of three observations of my teaching skills in a classroom setting. Each of the observations requires a pre-observation meeting with an observer, the actual teaching event, a post-observation meeting with the observer, and at last a reflective response paper on the progress of teaching. All of my observations were in large classes (almost 100 students). In all observations, the observers pointed to my strong presentation skills, the proper structure of the lecture, and excellent use of visual aids in terms of slides.