

Teaching Statement

Peyman Firouzi Naeim*
Georgia State University

November 9, 2018

In my view the basic principal of teaching is not to solve an specific problem for students, but to make them able to push at their boundaries and come to believe that they can project the real life problems into the general framework and reach conclusions by themselves. I Follow Socrates in “*Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.*” My teaching philosophy stems from my experience in teaching economics at both undergraduate and graduate (Master) levels. In what follows I explain the method that I developed as a teacher to be able to reach the goal of preparing students to solve real life problems using economic models.

Enthusiasm: Unlike more abstract fields like mathematics, economics can be linked to the real world problems that students experience in their everyday life. Students are dealing with concepts such as inequality, unemployment, and insurance, and they are interested in learning models that equip them with the tools and skills to have a better understanding of these phenomena. As a result, it is extremely useful to engage each session with an open-ended question about a specific concept and discuss the issue with students. In my Principles of Microeconomics course, I practiced this method, and the students have been showing interest in talking about these ideas. Guiding the discussion and showing the pitfalls of their arguments prepares students for the main part of the course. I always note to students that each model has its own weakness and remind them models are not perfect. However, they can provide us with a clearer and more consistent way to analyze a problem at hand. Then I return to the issue which I discussed at the beginning of the class and try to link the model to the real-life issues. Following this flow, students can think about the models in real life terms. They do not only remember a model by its name; rather, they think of each model by its applications in real life. I also challenge the seemingly intuitive statements and try to show students that there is not a definitive answer to all the questions. In more advanced, graduate-level courses like Health economics that I taught, this last part can be expanded more to such a degree that prepares students for a research question to challenge the common belief. I encouraged students when

* ✉ pfirouzinaeim1@gsu.edu
☎ +1(252)378 7882
🏠 www.pfirouzi.com

they showed skepticism about the models or when they raise questions to challenge me. I give them my understanding of the models to the best of my knowledge and guide them with the papers in the literature that point to their concerns.

Clarity: Having a clear roadmap can serve to reduce the possible tensions and misunderstandings. This is why in the first session of the class, I explain to students as clearly as possible, what the course objectives are and how they can achieve them. This was even more important in my undergraduate class of principles of microeconomics, where students were from different majors, and not all of them had developed the skills necessary for the course. I describe the grading scheme for the students and assure them that I do not compromise on the grading. Finally, I depict a broader picture and show them how this course can help them in real life, either the job opportunities which will be unlocked for them or how the course helps them to pursue their academic endeavors.

Critical Thinking: I believe in the *kindling of a flame* rather than *filling of a vessel*. I integrate this idea to the course design and class environment by adding a research requirement to the course. For my undergraduate course in the principle of microeconomics, I approached this goal by asking students to discuss “*why do we tip*”. I discussed the question in the last session of the course and gave students some clues to how and where they can look for the possible answers. I asked them to discuss the question using all the knowledge they had collected in the whole semester. I also designed essay exams with at least one question which was worth 5% of the total grade and asked students to discuss a subject using the tools they had learned during the course. For my graduate level class, I put more weight on critical thinking. Other than the comprehensive exam designs, students were responsible for discussing one paper from the pool of papers that I had suggested and presented it. I also asked them to conduct their own research and present their results at the end of the semester as well as submitting their term paper. Among those, three papers were turned to the master thesis.

Future Directions: Over the past years, I have taken multiple opportunities to practice my teaching skills. I constantly adjusted my teaching style and methods with the help of students feedback and faculties consults. I have enjoyed teaching both undergraduate and graduate level courses and based on my research areas I would be qualified to teach undergraduate course and graduate courses in microeconomics, microeconometrics, computational methods, structural estimation; as well as more topical courses such as health economics, labor economics, and economics of aging.