

Teaching Philosophy

Dr. Carlos Asarta

My experience in the classroom has been uniformly positive. As I continue to grow as an economics' teacher I realize that supporting student learning is crucial for the academic and personal success of undergraduates. Providing students with an understanding of economics requires preparation, a balance between clear explanation and real world examples, instructor availability, communication and enthusiasm for the subject matter. My goal as an instructor is to show students how economics affects their daily lives, not only by investigating the effects of fluctuations in exchange rates or business cycles, but also by relating economics to topics as mundane as going to the supermarket or buying a used car. It is only when students are able to understand the course material that they can reproduce and use the knowledge acquired to critically evaluate their environment.

My academic and athletic experiences have taught me that preparation is crucial for success. Just like preparing for a race, preparing a good lecture requires discipline, dedication and effort as well as a commitment to hard work. This philosophy has guided my efforts to look beyond the presentation of course material and to focus on student comprehension, class interaction, and meaningful follow-up opportunities. By viewing time spent in class as a part of a coherent strategy, I strive to enhance my students' understanding of economics by ensuring that every topic and example is carefully considered and is in place for a specific reason.

I believe that although textbooks are a great resource for learning they are not substitutes for good instruction. Textbooks cannot observe the class, textbooks cannot assess student understanding, textbooks cannot perceive confusion or the need for clarification, and textbooks often fail to incorporate recent real world examples. In every class I strive to give students the true value added in learning that cannot come from just a book. When they are able to take the abstract concepts of academia and apply them directly to their lives I feel I have succeeded. To this end, I strive to illustrate the laws, principles and relationships of economics in a student-centered framework. I also use discussion and questioning of students during my lectures so I can engage students in the learning process and help them develop critically.

I believe people are able to learn more efficiently through human interaction; after all, most of us will spend the rest of our lives learning from others. An old adage in education is that students won't care until they believe that you care. To that end, I make sure that I remember the names of my students by the second week of class so that I can address them directly and in a more personable manner. I am always available to meet with students during office hours, by appointment or simply anytime that I am in my office. I provide them with my e-mail account and office numbers to ensure that the communication process is in place to ultimately improve learning. Students are never a burden. I understand that I am here only because of them and for them. For this reason, I always offer extra office hours before every exam (sometimes whole days) and I make myself available after class for anyone with questions or concerns.

As a former business owner, I believe that I need to listen to my customers (students) and communicate with them. Feedback in class is accomplished via "One Minute Papers" where I ask them to tell me what they learned during the class period and what is unclear. I also include a question asking for their thoughts about the course and suggestions for improvement. "One Minute Papers" are a valuable, real time assessment tool. Instead of waiting for evaluations at the end of the semester, I can use them to communicate with my students, improve my lectures, teaching methods and as an ice-breaker for the next class period. Beyond in-class communication, the Internet is an integral tool I use to encourage my students before exams and quizzes, announce changes, clarify ideas or communicate general information about the course.

Teaching meaningful and applicable materials in a clear and organized manner, supporting student learning, respecting my students and listening and reacting to what they have to say are my objectives as a teacher. Being a college professor has been the most rewarding position that I have ever had. The rewards do not come from the pay, from the position or from the value to my future success; instead they come from a genuine love for teaching, for helping others achieve their goals and many times from simple "thank you" notes or comments from my students. Any dedicated teacher will tell you that is what ultimately matters.
