Teaching Philosophy
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In my experiences as a student, I often found the emphasis of coursework to be on the "how" of learning, rather than the "why." That is, the classroom environment was structured to introduce methods and facts, without much regard for the underlying reasons why the methods worked or how the methods connected to the facts. I believe that this approach creates limitations to learning, because it is through these neuropathways between facts that students' understanding elevates beyond short-term regurgitation into long-term application. As economists, we understand the importance of general equilibrium and externalities: events never occur in isolation. This economic thinking regarding the interconnected web of markets and individuals positions the field of economics uniquely to train students to seek out connections in all aspects of life, especially when learning. That is, economists, by default, think in terms of these connections – this "why." For that reason, the chief goal of my instructional philosophy is to help my students do the same.

A striking commonality among many well-recognized professors in the field with whom I have had discussions is the continued commitment to improving teaching methods for young economics students. This is because learning is a two-way street: it encompasses the development of a continuously growing web of consciousness for both the instructor and the pupil. A famous econometrician once remarked to me that he "still learns something new about OLS" through the exercise of developing teaching methods and hearing questions which arise from his students, who each have unique learning approaches and fresh perspectives. This attitude towards "teaching-as-learning" is remarkably positive and is what I strive for as an instructor. That is, I see my role as a teacher to be primarily a constructor of neuropathways between isolated facts in my students. Thus, each element of my courses should be built meticulously such that this development is supported. This process begins by establishing a learning environment that encourages questions and discussion between content. It is through these discussions that students create their web of understanding, and for that reason it is critical that the classroom environment fosters creative thinking and encourages risk-taking. One of my cornerstone philosophies is that humans often achieve the greatest levels of success through small failures, but the fear of failure in a general sense prevents us from asking that "dumb" question or shouting out the wrong answer which otherwise could build a neuropathway connection that leads to a cascade of deeper understanding.

The structure of classroom sessions should center on demonstrations and practice, with much of the content being presented outside of the classroom through a variety of delivery mechanisms (e.g. videos, text, recordings/podcasts, etc.). I strive to create classroom sessions which creatively motivate and demonstrate concepts such that prior lessons are drawn upon and students are actively engaged with the lesson. This again comes back to the building of neuropathways. Students frame information through their own experiences and ideas, thus I attempt to create motivation for students to seek these connections and provide them opportunities to actively create them by understanding their unique goals and providing diverse mechanisms for content engagement. In all, my content delivery approach may be summarized as a consistent stream of methodological demonstration followed by a variety of active, hands-on practice.

In-class active practice should be structured such that a diverse set of skills may be drawn upon and prior information is consistently recalled. Research has shown that neuropathways are built more effectively by requiring the frequent and consistent implementation of past knowledge through varying low-stakes mechanisms which allow different learning preferences to thrive: small-group discussions, practice problems, presentations, classroom competitions and games, etc. High-stakes assessments are

generally sub-optimal for the efficient building of neuropathways due to the stress they induce, but may not be entirely eliminated depending on the nature of the course. In-class discussions are critical and should not be solely focused on content. For example, frequent wellness checks and the occasional tangential idea create an environment where students enjoy participation and the general discussion of economics. I strive to create classroom discussions where students are comfortable brainstorming: proposing ideas and questions with only a moderate regard for their "correctness." This flow of ideas, questions, and thoughts is where growth occurs for students and instructors alike.

Learning and growth on the part of the instructor is an equally important element of my teaching philosophy. As demonstrated by the seasoned econometrician, everyone wins when professors continuously seek better methods for content delivery, student engagement, and classroom management. Student evaluations are key for gathering insight regarding effective vs. ineffective methods and creating instructor accountability. No two students enter the classroom with the same background, perspective, or learning preferences, and the ability to continuously adapt as an instructor comes with practice and preparation. Additionally, I have alluded to 'consistency' several times at this point. Consistency is paramount regarding the main course elements of content, assessments, and classroom engagement. My personal teaching style is, what I would call, "moderately relaxed." I believe that being enthusiastic and kind typically facilitates student engagement by making students feel comfortable and interested. However, I also believe that college is partly an experience in maturity, and I am comfortable with pushing my students to succeed.

To summarize, I believe that economics, as a discipline, is uniquely positioned to foster student success by instilling economic thinking in our students. True learning constitutes the construction of an ever-growing web of understanding which expands between and across topics, which is uncoincidentally the exact manner in which economists frame our ideas about markets, growth, and human behavior. This "why" approach to instruction fuels my actions in course design and classroom management such that I strive to help create neuropathways and motivate deeper understanding.