

Teaching Philosophy

Economics can be either dry or engaging depending on how the instructor presents the material. As a lifelong student of economics, I have had the privilege of having many professors who piqued my interest in economics and made lasting impacts on my decision to pursue the subject more deeply. From being exposed to their various teaching styles and methods, I have taken away three effective principles that I have, in turn, incorporated in my own teaching of Game Theory (Summer 2020); principles I hope to follow in all my future courses.

First, I believe effective teachers of economics make economics relevant not just for a successful career but also for the day-to-day decision making. The scope of modern Economics has become so broad that it now encompasses the study of culture and the psychology behind an individual's daily decision making. Early game theorists were mainly concerned about military tactics and business strategies, which are in the prerogative of key government or business leaders. However, today these same theories have a broad implication for virtually any decisions we make. To make the class more relevant, I came up with many examples where the students can put themselves as decision-makers. For example, understanding the importance of cooperation in the context of roommate relationships; the need to use backward induction in deciding whether to attend or skip a class; the necessary incentive schemes for more contribution in group projects, are some of the examples I used in class that are most relevant to a typical college student. As more than half of my students did not pursue economics as their primary major, my goal was to give these students a type of framework that they can use in any field or life circumstances they find themselves in.

Secondly, effective teachers of economics engage students. Economics can become very dry when students are buried in equations and theories and not have the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned. For this reason, I believe learning softwares such as Moblab is essential where students can practice making strategic decisions with one another. In my course, I have created an optional tournament where students can participate in these Moblab games and win Amazon gift cards. While the course was virtual due to the COVID restrictions, this event allowed students to see and interact with one another over Zoom. Many students have mentioned that this particular component was their favorite part of the course in the post-course evaluation. Additionally, I have used pop-culture references such as the popular Marvel movie "The Avengers: End Game." I showed a short clip of the film to set up the public goods game example where Ironman (the Hero) decides the rationality of giving his life to defeat Thanos (the ultimate evil). Having engaging examples and activities helps students learn the material better and retain them.

Lastly, effective teachers of economics should deeply care about the needs of individual students in addition to transferring knowledge. As I was preparing to teach Game theory in the summer of 2020, there were some unique challenges as I had to structure my course to be completely remote. It caught both my students and I off-guard as we were expecting this to be in-person. Despite the virtual nature, I wanted assure my students that they can easily approach me with questions and individual needs. For this reason, I created short motivation videos where students can see me casually talk about what they can expect from the course and give encouraging remarks about their overall progress in the course¹. Also, I created a survey midway into the course to collect students' feedback on how the course is going. Based on their

¹ Linked to example clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VW6bo_uTfml

individual feedbacks, I was able to adjust the quantity/intensity of the materials I were to teach next. Despite the technical issues that inevitably followed from teaching a virtual course, the students generally had a positive learning experience, as evidenced by the course evaluation. In the core measures of teaching effectiveness (Q13-Q16 of the course evaluation), I scored an average of 4.8/5.0.²

I plan on employing these teaching methods in other economics courses as well. I am eager and ready to teach principles of micro/macroeconomics and any advanced applied microeconomic topics such as Labor Economics (with a focus on immigration and education), Organizational Economics, and public policy. Also, I would enjoy the opportunity to teach students on getting causal estimates using frequently used tools by Economists; I have been trained in both causal inference methods using observation data and experimental methods.

To sum up, teaching economics has been a very rewarding experience and it will be a major part of my academic career. I am also ready and eager to make the necessary adjustments in the teaching platform and technology in light of the “new-normal” that COVID19 has created in the educational setting.

² Link to Course Eval: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ue8_D78gxDTBm5VDEjltUzonbggEhB4l/view?usp=sharing