

## **My Philosophy of Teaching**

Luyao Zhang

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zhang.2625@osu.edu

www.luyaozhang.com

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As the old saying goes, ‘Give a man fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.’ For me, teaching is not about transferring information from the teacher to the students, as from one hard drive to another, but motivating them to experience and build systematic methods of scientific inquiry and learning. As Socrates says, ‘I cannot teach anyone; I can only make them think.’ I teach economics as a way of thinking that will benefit the students’ overall life. I incentivize students to learn by designing assignments to be engaging at the beginning and rewarding at the end, and I engage students by utilizing modern technology to create an interactive learning environment in the classroom.

### **1. Teach economics as a way of thinking**

Learning starts with an interesting question. At the beginning of the semester, I ask the students to think of a question. It could be a question from their personal daily lives such as where to go for spring break; a business decision such as whether to open a restaurant on the high street, or a research question covering a group of subjects such as ‘what the impact of maternity leave on a woman’s career path is?’ Each week, besides regular quizzes on the course content, the students needed to submit a discussion of how the week’s course content could help to answer the question. At the midterm, each student was requested to present a proposal on how to solve their question via the methodology of economics. I then ask them to conduct a peer review of each other’s proposal and offer constructive advice. Later, the students respond to the reviews and revise their proposals for submission.

During the second half of the semester, I ask the students to develop their proposal into a short research paper. Each week, they submit part of their proposal (introduction, literature review, the basic model, the extension, discussion for future research, conclusion, and bibliography) for a progress check. I give detailed feedback on how to revise and suggest external resources that might help, for instance, to visit the research commons and writing center to develop their ideas and polish their writing.

Writing a research paper for the first time can be challenging. However, by breaking this big task into steps the students know where to start and gain confidence as they accumulate a record of success. More importantly, they develop independent research skills: 1) finding the key questions, 2) vetting resources to acquire information, 3) deploying strong analytical skills 4) communicating research results effectively 5) giving constructive advice and responding to peer evaluation. Furthermore, they internalize economics as a way of thinking that can be applied to daily issues, helping them better understand the world and make clearer decisions.

### **2. Incentivize students to learn**

Albert Einstein once said: ‘interest is the best teacher.’ I design engaging tasks to stimulate the students’ desire to learn and think like economists. For example, in the Intermediate Microeconomics course that I taught in Spring 2015, I gave students extra credits for submitting a photo they took during the spring break and a description of how it relates to the economics principles we learned about in class. In Elementary Econometrics (Summer 2016) I invited students to the economics laboratory to participate in a game theory experiment. After the experiment, I led a discussion to reflect on the discrepancy between subjects’ behaviors and economic theory, which experientially introduced students to Behavioral Economics. My students always participate enthusiastically in these non-compulsory extra credit sessions, with some even approaching me afterward to ask about pursuing a Ph. D. in economics.

Another way to motivate students is to give them more visual takeaways that document their success. I shoot and edit memorial videos of students’ presentations, so they can review their performance and share it with their family and friends. I provide students with instructions on how to create a personal website via a tool such as Weebly or Wix to showcase their learning, presentations, and research products from our class to potential employers. I also advise students on soliciting funding and submitting grant proposals for future research.

### **3. Engaging students using technology**

I incorporate technology to engage students inside and outside the classroom. For example, when teaching in a large lecture hall I use the cloud-based software TopHat to create one-to-one connections. It allows every student to answer discussion questions via their mobile device and see the real-time feedback. I set up and manage our course platform on digital learning environments such as Canvas and McGraw-Hill Connect to interact with students more effectively outside the classroom. This technology-rich environment facilitates greater personalization and connectivity and boosts interactive learning especially within lectures with large diverse audiences.

Teaching itself is a learning process and learning never ends. *Keep growing; never settle* has always been my motto. I have been improving my teaching skills little by little by attending workshops, enrolling in online educational courses, reacting to students’ evaluations, and self-assessment of each new method and the overall effectiveness of my classes.

I believe in sympathy and empathy, the moral sentiments, proposed by Adam Smith, that are indispensable to both economics and education. I try to put this into practice by caring for and displaying care for my students, and my students often react reciprocally. Together we thrive collaboratively and productively.

I am passionate about teaching because I am a passionate learner myself. I find my enthusiasm for both economics and teaching ignites a passion for knowledge in the students, and I thrive on both the students’ great feedback and constructive criticism. This drives me to keep growing professionally and empowering students to begin lives of ongoing exploration and learning.