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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

When I was an undergraduate, my intention was to major in management, but after taking the required economics courses in the business school, I decided to change my major to economics. The main reason for this change was the quality and dedication of my professors in my first introductory economics courses. Their attention to teaching not only made the class more engaging but increased my interest in economics as a discipline. I vividly recall my professor for principles of microeconomics, Mr. Vandenberg, who put a lot of emphasis on his lectures and verbal explanations rather than just the textbook. I remember when I had trouble working out certain problems, such as calculating opportunity cost, he would spend extra time with me and other students after class to run us through the problems until we understood. This experience demonstrated to me that a teacher can make a permanent, positive impact on students, and it is for this reason that I value teaching so much.

My teaching philosophy centers on creating an inclusive and stimulating learning environment where students feel comfortable exploring and questioning without fear of judgment. Economics can be an intimidating subject, especially for students who do not plan to pursue it as a major. My primary aim is to demystify these concepts and make them accessible to students from all walks of life by connecting theory to real-world applications and encouraging critical thinking. Whether I am teaching Introductory Microeconomics or Applied Business Economics, my goal is for every student to leave my classroom with a deeper understanding of how economics influences their lives and the world around them, regardless of their background or prior level of knowledge.

My teaching approach has been profoundly shaped by nearly four years of teaching English in Japan, where I worked with a remarkably diverse range of students, from young children to retirees, including professionals and academics. The variety of backgrounds and learning needs in my classroom taught me the critical importance of flexibility, as I had to adapt my teaching style to accommodate different goals and starting points. Often, students would come early or stay after class to seek help with specific vocabulary or complex grammar, which allowed me to connect with them on a personal level and refine my communication techniques. These experiences helped me develop a flexible approach to teaching, one that prioritizes adapting explanations and methods to meet the unique needs of each student.

These lessons translated seamlessly into my approach to teaching economics at the university level. I found that my time with students outside of the classroom was just as valuable back in America. Students sometimes might feel too shy to engage amongst a large group of their peers,

but before or after class, or during office hours, they often open up about struggles they might be having personally or with the material. These interactions are where true mentorship happens. This gives them a chance to ask about graduate school life, my research, and my experiences abroad. By fostering an environment where they feel safe and comfortable, I gain an appreciation and understanding for the complex responsibilities they balance alongside school. At Creighton University, I have expanded this mentorship role as a Faculty Fellow at the Menard Center for Economic Inquiry. Through the Center, I participate in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics reading groups and contribute to undergraduate research seminars. These co-curricular activities allow me to guide students as they formulate their own questions and explore the intersection of moral philosophy and market institutions, further deepening their intellectual engagement.

In the classroom, I use a combination of traditional lectures and practical applications to make economics accessible. I believe that students learn best when they are active participants in the discovery process rather than passive recipients of information. To achieve this, I incorporate interactive simulations that require students to test economic theories in real-time. For example, I utilize a pit trading experiment using playing cards to represent buyers' willingness-to-pay and sellers' costs. This simulation allows students to experience the chaos and coordination of a marketplace firsthand, vividly illustrating the marvel of the price system and how equilibrium is reached through mutually beneficial exchange. Additionally, I use daily news articles to connect microeconomic theories to current events, compelling students to apply their analytical tools to real-world scenarios. By fostering an environment centered on application and analysis, I aim to empower all students to actively participate, embrace challenges, and deepen their understanding of economics.

In addition to my role as an instructor of record, I have gained valuable insights by observing the teaching methods of experienced professors during my time as a teaching assistant. These experiences have shaped my teaching philosophy by reinforcing the importance of fostering a dynamic and interactive classroom, where students are encouraged to think critically, ask questions, and engage in meaningful discussions. I am committed to mentoring my students, not only to help them succeed academically but also to inspire them to pursue their own questions and research interests.

Ultimately, my goal as an educator is to inspire my students to become lifelong learners and critical thinkers. I believe that teaching is not just about delivering content; it is about igniting a passion for discovery and encouraging students to explore their own interests and ideas. Just as I witnessed my English learners in Japan grow in confidence and ability as they brought new knowledge into the classroom, I aim to cultivate a similar environment in my economics classes. I want to empower my students to take ownership of their learning, engage with economic concepts on a deeper level, and apply what they learn to their own lives and future endeavors. The joy of seeing students grow, ask questions, and challenge themselves is what drives me to continuously evolve as an educator and to strive to become the best teacher and mentor I can be.