Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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One of my most favorite experiences is conveying knowledge to students. I obtain the sense of achievement from their excitement of understanding a new theory or their smile when solving a haunting problem. As a Ph.D. candidate in Economics, I am able to teach any economics course for undergraduates; in addition, I am able to teach finance courses for undergraduates, as I took the three Ph.D. level finance field core courses in the Department of Finance. I can teach a broad list of courses in applied microeconomics and applied econometrics for graduates; and I am most interested and capable in teaching empirical industrial organization, real estate finance and economics, and microeconometrics.

I believe that the most important task of an instructor is to stimulate students’ interest and enthusiasm in studying economics. I always use examples closely related to students’ daily life to illustrate theories, such as textbook, dormitory, iPhone, student discount, and buckeye football ticket. Sometimes I use myself as an example. To explain the difference between GDP and GNP, I told my students that, as an international TA, my income is part of U.S. GDP but not U.S. GNP. In class I frequently bring up contemporary events and issues in the real world, such as the merger between American Airlines and US Airways, the law suit between Apple and Samsung, the U.S. fiscal cliff, foreclosure mitigating policies, and the Federal Reserve’s regulation on financial institutions. During the semester, the students are required to bring an article to class from the Wall Street journal, Financial Times, or The Economist, and to give a short presentation on the main points of the article and how it relates to the textbook. After the student’s presentation, I often provide an outline of the subfield of economics related to that article and the corresponding upper level economic course offered by the department. For example, one student presented an article on education, and then I illustrated an outline of labor economics; another student presented an article about the Black Friday before Thanksgiving, and then I told him that he could learn further from industrial organization. Sometimes I even relate the topic of their presentations to a frontier reach paper. These efforts make them aware that there is plenty of interesting material in economics beyond what they can learn from an introductory level course and worthwhile to explore further.

I always recognize students’ perspectives during my teaching. When I prepare material for the next class, I spend some time recalling how I studied this material when I was a student, which part I struggled through, and what concepts confused me. Then I share these experiences with my students in class. On one hand, this helps them better understand the material. On the other hand, they will not feel anxious if they encounter some difficulties.

I believe that the job of an instructor is to make complicated knowledge easy to understand, rather than make easy material complicated. I use many examples, numerical tables, and diagrams to illustrate theories. In addition to showing the diagrams on slides, I find that it is very helpful to draw them on the
blackboard step by step, which is easier for the students to follow. I also emphasize conveying the intuitions behind the theories.

In addition to teaching textbook material, I teach the students how to learn efficiently. Most of the textbooks for principle level courses use many examples and stories to illustrate theories. The advantage of doing this is that it makes the theories easy to understand. However, the drawback is that the key points are scattered in the textbook. It is difficult for the students to grasp the import points and construct connections among them. To help the students have a systematic view and a long-lasting memory of what they learn, I often provide summaries after I explain a group of theories. For example, after I explain the classical model, the Keynesian model, and the modern Keynesian model, I would draw a table summarizing the difference among their assumptions, derivations, and conclusions.

The communication and interaction between the instructor and the students is of importance in the teaching and learning process. In class, instead of letting the student passively receive what I teach, at certain points I will ask them questions to let them think actively. I also encourage them to ask questions. Moreover, I provide generous and flexible office hours, during which I can give the students specific help. Sometimes I share the good questions asked during my office hours with the whole class, and later I find that the students asking those questions make more effort in studying. I make use of the several minutes before class begins to chat with my students. During this time, they are willing to tell me which part they find difficult and whether I teach too fast or too slow.

I would like to be nice and friendly to my students, and have a sense of humor in class. When the students view me as a friend, they will truly tell me what they think, which will help me adjust my teaching accordingly. One time when I gave the class a quiz, a student asked whether they need to fill the birthday on the scantron. I said: “You don’t need to fill the birthday. There won’t be a surprise party for you.” Another time on Halloween, I brought some candies to the class and said “here are some treats, so no tricks”.

Besides teaching in class, I am interested in providing advice on students’ projects. One of my students is leading a team developing Apple Apps and seeking for venture capital funding. I gave them advice on their profit models. In the 2013 meeting of Midwest Economics Association (MEA), I served as a discussant for an undergraduate research session and provided comments for the best undergraduate paper selection process.

As a young Ph.D. student, I always make an effort to accumulate teaching experiences and build teaching abilities. For each chapter, I make a record of students’ questions, thus I can adjust my teaching according in the future. Moreover, I exchange teaching experience with other instructors and TAs. I truly enjoy teaching economics and would like pursue it as my life-time career.