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Statement of Teaching Philosophy

My passion for teaching has been kindled by the many great professors with whom I have been privileged to study throughout the course of my undergraduate and graduate education. Their enthusiastic and lucid teaching styles made economics fun and easy to understand. Collectively, they have been a major source of motivation for me to pursue a career in academia and become a dedicated professor who can hopefully inspire future generations of students as well. Thus far, I have had the opportunity to teach three courses: Microeconomics at Thammasat University, and Economic Principles and Econometrics at Duke University. In my teaching, I strive to help the students develop a strong grasp of the economic concepts and tools along with an awareness of when and how to apply this knowledge towards solving actual problems. To achieve this goal, I focus on establishing three aspects in particular: lessons that foster intuitive understanding, assessments that stimulate independent thinking, and a learning environment that nurtures questioning and collaboration.

The myriad of economic concepts can be daunting. In order to make these concepts more accessible to students, especially those in the early stages of their undergraduate degrees, I believe it is important to not just intellectualize but also foster intuitive understanding of the principal ideas. In that regard, I like to incorporate real-world examples into the lessons as much as possible to illustrate the economic concepts in a more relatable way. Furthermore, I try to emphasize how the different concepts relate to or expound on each other. The more the students are able to perceive these underlying connections, the more they are able to sense the overarching issues. I similarly try to emphasize the connections between the theoretical concepts and the quantitative tools. In so doing, I hope the students would not just be able to do the math, but would also develop greater insight about properly applying the math to solve problems in a variety of cases.

In addition to the lessons, assessments constitute another essential component of teaching and learning. If designed properly, they do not merely provide a way to measure comprehension but can also serve to stimulate independent thinking. Consistent with this notion, I believe in designing assessments that challenge students to think beyond what has been presented in the readings and lectures. Along with straightforward comprehension and computational questions, I like to include problems that require the students to apply and extend the concepts that they have learned to new cases and in new ways. On a more advanced level, I hope the students would be able to leverage their understanding of how the different concepts and tools are interconnected in order to combine the various ideas to approach complex problems. I feel that repeated exposure to these kinds of exercises cultivates creativity and resourcefulness.

A factor that is sometimes overlooked in teaching is the learning environment. I strongly believe in an open learning environment that nurtures questioning and collaboration. Encouraging students to ask questions is a valuable means to check on their understanding and gain feedback on how to tailor the lessons to that particular audience. Moreover, I find that students tend to think more deeply when they are actively questioning the material. They interpret and evaluate the conditions in order to pose meaningful questions, which is a fundamental research skill to practice. I therefore welcome questions and like to make myself available to students after class, during office hours, and via email. I also like to promote teamwork among the students, which offers a different opportunity for active questioning on a peer level. Bouncing questions off one another, the students can uncover and help each other complete gaps in their understanding. At the same time, they can supplement each other’s insights and provide each other with alternative approaches to the same problems.
Teaching has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my academic life, and I am fully committed to this core responsibility. I enjoy engaging with students to help them learn the various concepts and tools within the field of economics. Beyond equipping them with knowledge, however, I hope to simultaneously impart a clear vision of when and how this knowledge can be applied to address real issues. I feel this goal can be best realized by ensuring that the lessons foster intuitive insight, that the assessments stimulate independent thinking, and that the learning environment nurtures questioning and collaboration. If these factors are in place, I am optimistic that students would come to appreciate the value of economics and be inspired to further their studies in this field.