In my teaching, I aim to foster critical thinking, challenge students’ curiosity, and provide a set of tools that apply not only to economics, but extend to everyday life. Students in both my core courses and upper-level electives are engaged in the learning process, and take an active ownership in their success. They are asked to connect with the global community outside of the classroom, confront challenging issues beyond their comfort zone, and apply knowledge gained in class to real world problems. I seek to create an environment where dialogue flows between students and teacher, and where assessment is a step in the learning process rather than a hurdle. Each new semester, new course, and new section offers opportunities to refine my pedagogical style, incorporate new insights from my research experience, and find innovative ways to improve as a teacher.

In order to achieve these goals, I structure my courses to motivate student participation and engagement from the very beginning. I recognize that each student enters a course with a unique set of expectations, and many are turned off by the perception that economics is irrelevant to their lives. I start each term by unpacking these expectations, establishing clear goals and objectives, and motivating students to take ownership of their learning. I plant the seeds for an active environment on the first day of the term by having each individual complete an information form with questions such as “Define Economics,” and “What do you hope to learn in class?” In the discussions that follow, I encourage students to elaborate on their answers, work with each other in a think-pair-share model, and revisit their prior beliefs and preconceptions.

I strive to bring passion and enthusiasm to the front of the classroom each and every day. Just as students learn economics in a myriad of ways, each individual responds uniquely to different teaching strategies. While I build variation into my syllabus to teach overarching concepts multiple ways, I have found being engaged and approachable in and outside of class offers the best chance to connect with students. I focus class time on the shared experience of posing questions and answering them with students rather than transferring material to students. For my upper-level seminar course, this means drawing on my own research experience to guide students in critically evaluating alternative claims in the literature, and mentoring students on extending their own analyses in new directions. In my core classes, this means presenting economics as a broad social science that investigates human behavior rather than a set of abstract concepts. I begin and end each class with questions, utilize active learning techniques such as minute papers, and frame learning not as rote memorization of facts and equations, but a process of engaging with the material, analyzing and evaluating its uses, and examining new insights that economics reveals.

To assess my progress in achieving my teaching goals, I not only rely on summative student evaluations and those I solicit midway through the term, but draw on the constant feedback provided in the classroom. By maintaining an engaged and interactive class, I am able to adjust lessons as they are in progress. Carefully designed problem sets and exams also provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of my instruction, and mark progress toward attaining course learning objectives. My exams are part of the learning process, and ask students to apply concepts to situations where economic tools provide new insights on topics relevant to their lives.

To be a successful teacher, one needs to continually look for ways to improve. I have taken a number of steps to develop as an instructor, including attending pedagogy workshops, enrolling in teaching courses, and participating in a peer-evaluation of teaching program. I have also drawn on resources outside of Duke, including attending conference sessions and participating in the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) program. As a PFF Fellow, I gained firsthand experience teaching and mentoring senior thesis projects in a liberal arts setting at Elon University. I look forward to expanding my instructional experience, incorporating undergraduates into my research program, and seeking out new opportunities to improve my skills as a teacher.