

Teaching Philosophy Statement Andrew J. Fieldhouse

My liberal arts education at Swarthmore College was a transformative experience that heavily influenced my teaching philosophy. The Oxford-style honors program was an overwhelmingly positive encounter with a flipped classroom; in our weekly five-hour seminars, students would be the ones solving problems on the blackboard, fielding questions, and analyzing readings, with our professors ensuring comprehension of material we had taught ourselves or one another, rather than lecturing. Swarthmore's Economics Department also afforded my first formal experience teaching, rewardingly serving as a teaching assistant and tutor. And now teaching has been an incredibly gratifying and energizing component of my education while pursuing my doctorate.

Reflecting on these experiences, my teaching philosophy can be distilled to fostering intellectual curiosity and engagement, honing analytical thinking and problem solving techniques, refining written and oral communication skills, helping prepare students for likely careers, and imparting a similar excitement and appreciation of the relevance of their economics studies to public policy, particularly as engaged citizens.

I want my students to have both the toolkit to better understand economic reporting or policy debates as well as the inquisitiveness and enthusiasm to follow such discussions. I try to help students to connect the dots between the course material and current events, politics, or policy decisions, and to realize the applicability of what they are learning. Yet I want students to question our models' assumptions, and to think critically and constructively about their shortcomings, particularly with respect to distributional concerns that are all too easily obscured; my classroom should help dispel the myth that our discipline is unduly concerned with efficiency at the expense of equity. I aim to help prepare students for likely careers, particularly those related to economics and public policy, and to know those careers exist. I want the student who started the class primarily thinking of it as a means to job in finance able to weigh and explain the pros and cons of a stronger dollar for the U.S. economy—especially on their feet, during a job interview. But at the end of each semester, I also emphasize that studying economics opens up numerous career options beyond finance and consulting, notably in law, government, multinational organizations, and think tanks, among others; and I encourage my students to come meet with me if they're interested in public or non-profit sector career paths.

I want to help all students hone their ability to clearly communicate complex analytical concepts, which spans well beyond the typical purview of problem sets and in-class exams. Whenever possible, I take a back seat during office hours and encourage students to teach one another, particularly by coaxing them up to the white board to sketch out they're approach and expound the underlying concepts to their peers. Beyond developing key professional skills, this is a valuable as both a learning and confidence building exercise. And I staunchly believe that clear, effective writing is a fundamental, requisite skill that every university graduate should possess. Contrary to my undergraduate experience, many economics departments do their students a disservice by eschewing writing in their undergraduate curriculum. The more technical, positive style of writing

and analysis through the lens of economics is a markedly different skill than the writing our students have practiced in high school or humanities courses; moreover, many students will need field-relevant writing samples for internship or job applications.

Undergraduate intermediate macroeconomics courses can be rather dry and require learning—too often memorizing—a lot of relationships, stylized facts, and institutional details. Effective teaching must build on prior knowledge, so I loop back to material from prerequisite classes, demonstrating how we'll use the same concept in a new framework, making material more approachable and intuitive. To better connect with a diverse classroom, I always try to always expose my students to graphical, algebraic, and more analytical, expository approaches to new material or problems. I also draft weekly section handouts with my problems and some review material typed out, so they can more easily engage with the material at hand rather than frantically transcribing everything. To keep students engaged, I try to change the subject and style of teaching every 10-15 minutes or so. Most of my sections are taught using a blackboard, but after writing for a while, I like to zoom out and discuss what concepts are really driving the math or graph at hand, or the relation to a real world policy question or recent newspaper headlines. I'll slow down, migrate, try to make eye contact, and encourage questions or conversation. And I'll often recap and recast the problem we just solved in terms of the problem solving technique or "trick" we used, related pitfalls, and how we could apply similar approaches elsewhere.

Both my philosophy and style of teaching will surely evolve along with academia and technological innovation. I view proactively seeking out mentorship and professional development opportunities as key to continually developing one's teaching style in a rapidly changing world. While pursuing my doctorate, I elected to take a course "The Practice of Teaching in Higher Education" to learn about current research and thinking about teaching, as well as to reflect upon and improve my own pedagogical approach. As a junior professor, I will seek out peer mentorship within my new department and resources through something akin to Cornell's Center for Teaching Excellence. There's also a lot to be learned from watching junior faculty experiment with integrating new technology into the classroom. While I'm convinced that lecturing off of a slide deck is almost always an ineffective teaching strategy, I currently plan to emulate one junior professor who lectured off of an iPad, seamlessly jumping between deriving entire models or drawing graphs in GoodNotes and displaying figures or reference slides.

Designing my own course, I would require students to write several short essays applying their analytical toolkit, related course content, and basic research skills—the kinds most applicable for many entry level jobs, such as finding and plotting relevant time series—to the lens of a particular policy question. Such assignments can easily be framed as contextualized "authentic assessments," a constructive tool for engaging students and fostering creativity. For instance, I intend to reframe that essay on the Recovery Act as asking an economist with the Council of Economic Advisors for a three-page memo analyzing the bill's merits circa January 2009, to inform President Obama's decision to enact or veto the bill. Similarly, I think it's constructive to have intermediate macroeconomics students analyze the most recent Federal Open Market Committee

statement as we learn about monetary policy, but I would ask them to write an article for the *Wall Street Journal* explaining that decision, placed in its relevant context.

Years out from their undergraduate courses, our students' retention of much of the course material we teach will fade under a barrage of new information and life experiences. But the deeper lessons of how to tackle problems, how to formulate arguments and articulate thoughts, and how to critically absorb new material will simply be repurposed to new intellectual pursuits and careers—these are the skills our teaching must always underscore and advance. I want my students to feel empowered and confident to teach themselves whatever is demanded by circumstances or compelled by curiosity, and to know that they can always crack open an old textbook or find the right data series online if something they read or hear sounds suspect. From my own undergraduate years, the academic exercises with the most staying power were those of the honors program's flipped classrooms and authentic assessments, such as drafting policy memos or arguing moot court cases. Such teaching methods designed to energize and deeply engage our students will advance long-lived, critical approaches to learning, and hopefully, our students will retain or build upon some of our course material for decades after all.