

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Rachel Sederberg, Ph.D.

Our lives are marked by a never-ending series of teachers, be it in academics, athletics, business, or our personal life. Teachers shape us, whether we know it or not, so when it comes to teaching, I try to bring together the best qualities of all the teachers I have had in my life – from grade school through graduate school, from academia to athletics. I think that the most important thing a teacher can do is to teach life through lessons within a single discipline, so that is what I set out to do at the beginning of every semester.

Economics touches upon many aspects of everyday life. In the classroom, I aim to make economics understandable, attainable, relatable, and applicable while diversifying my approach to teaching and assessment to cater to all types of learners from all walks of life.

Understandable:

Economics for some may seem to be common sense, while for others, it may seem to be utter gibberish. No two students learn the same. For this reason, I teach each concept in a number of ways. We will discuss the underlying concepts and theories, explore the topic visually, and then try to explain the concept to one another as well. The intent is that the varied approach will appeal to all types of learners, whether they are visual, auditory, or kinesthetic.

Attainable:

I grew up playing golf, and one of my coaches once told me that I always needed to take things one shot at a time, one hole at a time. His point was that I needed to focus on what was in front of me, rather than looking too far in the future, because panicking about the big picture would do me no good. Deal with one thing at a time, and the bigger picture will eventually come into focus. This approach is one that I take with my students. Economics can seem daunting, but I work with them to break it down into digestible pieces, and before they know it, the daunting concept doesn't seem so daunting anymore.

I vary my approach to student assessment. I ask questions in a number of different ways and offer different methods of demonstrating knowledge. For example, my exams consist of different types of questions, from multiple choice, to true and false, to short answer. In addition to exams, I encourage students to demonstrate their knowledge during class by offering verbal explanations or using visuals on the board to explain a concept, and this is reflected in a participation portion of their final grade. I want to make sure that my students can understand and articulate a concept, and I try to offer them a number of vehicles by which to do it.

Relatable:

To begin every semester, I ask my students to tell me about themselves via an online assignment with simple prompts. I ask where they are from, their major, their reason for taking an economics course, their interests outside of the classroom, and if there anything else they want to tell me about themselves. From this information, I can gain knowledge about their backgrounds, interests, and previous knowledge that I can then incorporate into the concepts we discuss in class. If a student plays a sport, I may be able to explain comparative advantage using different

position players on a professional team that they follow. If a student is from another country, I may be able to ask them about their experiences with a public policy that is different from that in the United States. I believe that the more I am able to bring economics into my students' everyday lives, the more they will relate to, care about, and understand the subject.

Applicable:

We make assumptions and simplify the world to fit it into a model. This can make students shy away from the subject because it seems abstract. For this reason, I try to bring current events into each and every class. Yes, what we talk about is a simplification of the real world, but that doesn't mean that it can't help us to understand the workings of the world that surrounds us. If a student leaves my principles course and can better understand the things that they see on the news, then I feel that I have done my job. Not everyone is going to go into economics, but economics is part of everyday life, no matter one's profession.

Arnold Palmer, the legendary golfer, once said "The road to success is always under construction." This is an approach that I try to take when teaching. I try to adapt to the needs of my students and find new ways of making the material interesting and engaging for them. Pedagogy is not something that should be set in stone. There is always room for improvement.