

Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Building Bridges

I believe my role as a teacher is to provide guidance, structure and incentives to students, so they can develop their intellectual curiosity, reasoning abilities, and critical thinking skills. I also believe that my job is to reduce barriers to entry and show students that the course material is within their reach. I aim to transmit a genuine interest in the course, and make the content as accessible as possible. I do my best to help students explore fields they were unaware of, or thought they might not be interested in at first. I hope to trigger students' curiosity. I work to include those students who would not have been drawn naturally to economics. I try to take into account the fact that stereotypes and beliefs may impact performance and the development of students' interests. One of my goals is to foster self-confidence in my students and reduce stereotype threat, for instance to improve female students' performance in math-related topics. I create incentives for students to study, as I think that students' interests can only develop if students work through the material on their own or with their peers. I try to imitate my favorite teachers in college and graduate school. These teachers had me work hard, and were also encouraging and supportive. Most importantly, they showed that they cared for their students. To achieve these goals, I view my role as someone who builds bridges.

✓ Building bridges between teacher and students

I value student participation, and strive for students to be involved in class. In each lecture, I present new concepts to students, and ask for their participation to build the reasoning that links the concepts together. I value in-class understanding of the material, which I believe is within the reach of each student attending the lecture. I consider that teaching is similar to the building of a house: while I provide the plans, the bricks and the cement, the students are the ones who actually build the house. Getting students involved in the building of the course sparks their curiosity and their interest, and makes them improve on their skills.

Participation creates a class dynamic that fosters learning. Also, participation enables me to tailor my explanations to students' difficulties. When students get stuck on a point, I find different ways of explaining the material. I try to identify each student's strengths and weaknesses, and target some assignments to correspond to students' specific needs. I make myself available to the students, so they feel free to seek my help when they need it, during class or outside of class.

There are several ways through which I stimulate students' participation. First, I polish the structure of each lesson, to make them easy to follow. This practice increases the students' confidence in me, as they know where I am taking them. Second, I focus on conveying clear explanations: students feel more confident to ask questions if they feel that they will obtain the answers they need from me. Third, I aim to transmit my enthusiasm for the topics I teach. When shared, this enthusiasm generates students' willingness to engage in the class. Fourth, I try to set a positive tone in class, and encourage all students to participate, even those who would otherwise be afraid of "saying something stupid." When students do not give the correct answer, I guide

their reasoning so that they eventually find the correct reasoning on their own. Finally, I try to be approachable and make myself available to the students, whether they need help to solve a problem or whether they solicit my guidance to further their knowledge outside of class. For instance, a student required my help in writing a research paper for an undergraduate economics conference he wanted to participate in, and I was happy to guide him through the task.

Finally, I find that creating an atmosphere conducive to student participation generates incentives for students to work at home between lectures. Indeed, I think it is easier to get students to study between lectures if they feel involved and believe that the content is within their reach.

✓ **Building bridges between learning objectives**

I structure my courses around three learning objectives for students: understanding the concepts covered during lectures, acquiring economic reasoning (understanding how economists think), and mastering the three languages of economics to express this reasoning (math, graphs, and plain English).

These three objectives are tested regularly, through continuous assessment. I try to give feedback quickly after each assignment or test, so that students can benefit from the exercise and correct mistakes before the next evaluation. I try to test a wide scope of skills, and hope to encourage deep learning rather than cramming: problem solving through math exercises, the organization of ideas through short essay questions, oral presentation skills, etc. I find it is especially rewarding when students make progress.

New technologies can help create incentives for students to work and for me to monitor their progress. I use the Moodle learning management system, which is great to structure course content, and helps me provide valuable feedback to students. I also use the platform to post online video tutorials I have made to explain the basic concepts of economics.

✓ **Building bridges between disciplines**

Each discipline has its own ways of thinking. However, many disciplines are linked to each other. For example, I often refer to psychology and political science to complement economic explanations in the courses I teach. Different cultures and cultural identities also influence economic behavior. I find it very enriching for students to analyze these interactions. I hold the strong belief that students who get a well-rounded education thanks to interactions between different disciplines are those who are the most able to develop critical thinking skills.

For the past six years, I have been teaching at Sciences Po Paris, a highly selective school that specializes in international and interdisciplinary programs. The students I have been teaching to come from many different countries. Their core courses include law, sociology, political science, economics, history, languages and humanities. I especially enjoy teaching them economics in a program which values interdisciplinary courses in an international context (all courses are taught in English).

✓ **Building bridges between prior knowledge and new knowledge**

Students start university with a wide variety of backgrounds. Some of my students are French, but most are foreign students who attended many different high school systems. Some students have more of a literary background, while others have more of a scientific background. Because learning is enhanced when students can relate the new course content with what they have already learned in previous courses, I try to make the course material relate to both scientific knowledge, and literary knowledge, in order to include all students in the learning process. To do so, I assess student's prior knowledge at the beginning of the semester.

✓ **Building bridges between the class material and the “real world”**

I do my best to link the theoretical models we study in class with economic current events. I typically start my lectures by presenting these current events to students to captivate their attention, and to make them understand that the theory they are about to learn is important to better understand the “real world.” I also have students read case studies so they get to see how the concepts we cover in class apply outside of class. This interaction also includes letting the course material evolve as time goes by and as current events change how we study economics.

✓ **Building bridges between students**

Interactions between students are an integral part of the learning process. I encourage these interactions through class participation, and by asking students to work in groups of two on short exercises in class. I am a strong believer in collaborative learning techniques, which enable me to make the most out of student heterogeneity. Also I find that interactions in classes with strong student diversity are enriching for both students and me.

✓ **Building bridges between teaching, research and service**

My motivation to start a PhD program was based on both a strong interest in research and teaching. I have come to believe that teaching is a complement to research: teaching keeps me focused on my research activities, and it reminds me to keep things as simple as possible. Advances in research generate changes in course content and the pedagogical approach to teaching. As Assistant Dean for undergraduate studies in economics and math, and currently Scientific Advisor for pedagogical innovation at Sciences Po, I keep up to pace with the literature on higher education and economics education.

I have taken great pleasure in teaching over the past ten years, and am looking forward to further improving my teaching skills. I wish to continue sharing my passion for the topics I teach. The challenge of sparking students' interests continues to motivate me. One student wrote me once that my teaching had given him “the economics fever.” This type of student feedback is the best reward I can hope for.