

## **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 increase students' self-confidence, 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 did not know of or thought they might not be interested in at first. I hope to trigger students' curiosity, and work to include those students who would not have been drawn naturally to economics or mathematics, the two topics I teach. I try to take into account the fact that stereotypes and beliefs may affect performance and the development of students' interests. One of my goals is to foster self-confidence in my students, for instance to improve female students' performance in math-related topics. I create incentives for students to work, as I think that students' interests can only develop if students work through the material themselves. I try to imitate my favorite teachers in college and graduate school. These teachers had me work hard, but 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 reasoning, 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.

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 try to find different ways of explaining the material. I try to identify each student's strengths and weaknesses and target some assignments to correspond to student's 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 never tell a student that he/she is wrong while giving an answer to a question. By doing this, I try to set a positive tone in the class, and encourage all students to participate, even those who would otherwise be afraid of "saying something stupid". When a student does not give the correct answer, I guide the student's reasoning so that he/she eventually finds the correct reasoning on his/her own. Finally, I try to be approachable and

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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, last year, 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. This semester, I have started using the Moodle platform, which is great to facilitate student self-assessment through online tests I create, 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 tools of economics to incoming Masters students at Sciences Po.

✓ **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 political science to complement economic explanations in my classes. 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 most able to develop critical thinking.

For the past three 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 specialize in European and Asian studies, come from many different countries, and are required to spend their third year studying abroad. 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 enter 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.

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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 deal with economics. For example, the economic crisis that started in the United States in 2007 has changed what I teach in my macroeconomic courses.

✓ **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. Recently, I have tried to include collaborative learning techniques in my teaching, to make the most of student heterogeneity. Also I find that interactions in classes with strong student diversity are enriching for both students and me. I believe that college and graduate schools are the best places to learn and discover society's diversity.

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

My motivation to start a PhD program was based on both an interest in research and a strong desire to teach. 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 to maintain others interested. Furthermore, advances in research generate changes in course content and the pedagogical approach to teaching. For the past three years, I have been academic coordinator for undergraduate courses in economics and math at Sciences Po. Among my tasks, I keep up to pace with the literature on economics education. For instance, I follow the *Journal of Economic Education* and have started conducting research of my own on teaching practices at Sciences Po.

*I have taken great pleasure in teaching over the past eight years, and am looking forward to further improving my skills in teaching. 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 could hope for.*