

## Adam A. Millsap

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### **STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY**

My teaching philosophy starts with my belief that my major objective is to help students learn how to learn. In order to accomplish this goal I create an environment that encourages critical thinking. It is not possible to replicate every unique economic situation in the classroom. My goal is for my students to develop a firm grasp of the basic tools of economic analysis and the self-confidence to learn more advanced techniques in the future.

I want my students to be intelligent skeptics who understand the economic way of thinking. I want them to question ideas, form their own opinions, and then support those opinions with sound arguments. The economic models of supply and demand and marginal analysis are important tools for analyzing humanity. Those tools, combined with the concept of opportunity cost, can help students understand world affairs. A firm understanding of these concepts provides a foundation for the critical thinking that is necessary to succeed in the modern world.

To gain the respect of students it is important to demonstrate to them that the skills they are learning are useful for more than just passing a class. I show my students that economics is everywhere by constantly using real world examples. Articles about price ceilings in Panama and organic egg shortages in the U.S. illustrate how the laws of supply and demand affect real people. I also show how the Coase theorem can apply to more than just roommate disputes using examples such as Texas rice farmers and lake-house owners bargaining over water rights. I frequently show the connection between the real world and what I teach so that my students are aware of the practical insights that can come from economics.

I have taught several large classes of eighty plus students as well as a summer class that only had seven students. Each type of class has its challenges but students deserve a teacher's best effort regardless of class size. I am comfortable in both environments and I use techniques that allow me to reach students on an individual level even in the large classes. I use different mediums in my classes including PowerPoint presentations, video clips, and white boards. I switch between all three to keep the students engaged. I use video clips to show them economics in action and to provide examples of fundamental concepts. In today's world video is ubiquitous and young people are constantly consuming information via video. Using videos in the classroom helps me compete for their attention. The video topics include the role of prices in a market economy, why it is difficult for the private sector to provide public goods, and how trade benefits people by conserving resources.

I provide opportunities for students to practice the concepts that I teach in class. After every lesson I provide an active-learning, in-class exercise for them to work on in small groups and then we discuss the answers as a class. This gives each student a chance to see how well they understand the material relative to their fellow students. It also provides an opportunity for the relatively stronger students to confirm their understanding by explaining the material to their classmates who may not have grasped it as quickly. In addition to helping the students it gives me feedback on what concepts remain unclear so that I can address them again and in a new way if necessary. I also assign homework on a regular basis to provide my students with frequent feedback about their progress. I hold regular office hours for my classes and respond to emails in a timely fashion, but I always make it clear to my students that I am available throughout the week outside of office hours as well.

I think that teaching and research, like capital and labor, are complements rather than substitutes. Good researchers should be able to simplify even their most complicated research so that a principles student can grasp the theory and conclusions. In addition, the curiosity of principles students can result in questions that spark research ideas. One goal I have is to engage students in the research process so that they can begin to understand the way economists conduct research. As an example I am currently assisting an honor's program student with his senior thesis.

I enjoy teaching. It is a wonderful feeling when one of my students tells me that they are switching their major to economics because they enjoyed my class. I realize that not every student will share my enthusiasm for economics and make such a decision. Nevertheless, by sharing my passion for economics I have convinced many students that it is a rewarding major and I intend to continue to do so.