Teaching Statement

My teaching focuses on microeconomics theory at the introductory and intermediate level (EC 200 and EC 300). EC 300 is among the most challenging courses undergraduates take in an economics program. It requires heavy use of math and analytical rigor which many of my students are not confident in at the outset. Building on my research on how people build skills, I dedicate the first few classes sharpening students' mathematical skills. My classes are not math classes, but establishing this base knowledge allows students to spend more time understanding the material intuitively rather than being lost in the math. So that stronger students are still challenged by the class, I aim high and encourage students to develop an intuitive understanding of the material.

Keeping students engaged

My teaching style is highly entrepreneurial and I use this to keep students interested. One approach I have used is making extensive use of real-world examples. Following the "Liberation Day" tariffs, I began opening classes by having students volunteer to briefly discuss recent economic news. I use this to connect economics models to concepts students are passionate or concerned about. One student brought in a news article about the "Mississippi Miracle" where reading test scores in Mississippi jumped from the the worst in the US to near the top. This naturally segued into debates about the optimal design of social programs and how the government should spend limited resources. I bring in empirical evidence from the economics literature and my own work to inform these debates. I regularly send out both peer-reviewed papers and less rigorous pop-social science articles and podcasts as supplemental materials following these discussions. Because discussions are student initiated topics are wide-ranging. Students have brought in discussions ranging from corporate tax increases to off-shore wind farm expansions. By connecting a broad range of topics to the abstract models, I have found that students engage more with the class and develop strong intuitions rather than thinking economics is confined to simple prices and quantities.

Another approach I use is to organize in-class activities that demonstrate concepts with hands-on active learning. For example, I had students participate in a mock market game while teaching perfect competition. I gave each student a card representing either their willingness to buy or sell. They then tried to match with a seller or buyer respectively and were rewarded with chocolate coins equal to the difference in price.

Finally, I encourage students to meet with me one-one. This is usually in office hours, but when students show an interest in research I will also invite them to talk with me even after finishing my course to provide mentorship if they are they are interested. A few promising students have ended up working as an RA for me or for colleagues of mine if I did not have any work at that time.

Beyond the traditional classroom, I actively tutor students throughout the year taking a variety of classes. During tutoring sessions I employ a more Socratic method of instruction then is possible in a large classroom. For example, rather than showing the student how to take a derivative, I will ask them to walk me though how to do it. I let students lead me down wrong paths so they can figure out for themselves why their idea is wrong but a common misunderstanding. In my experience, many students are comfortable with the math of economics problems, but not with the intuition. During tutoring sessions I push students to develop their intuitions by continually asking student to explain the math they are doing in English not math.