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Statement of Teaching Philosophy
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My core mission as an educator is to prepare students to contribute and thrive in an ever-changing, often unpredictable world. Consistent with this, I endeavor to teach students how to think critically and creatively, to empower them to work through situations where there may be ambiguity, and to hone their ability to communicate clearly. Armed with these skills, students will be empowered to successfully solve real-world problems and to make prudent decisions in all areas of their lives.

My courses and classroom time are structured to accomplish this goal. In far too many cases, especially in economics, students become passive consumers of information rather than critical thinkers and contributors. To counteract this, when teaching Urban Economics, I require that students not only complete problem sets and take exams, but also participate in debates, class discussions, and student presentations. Incorporating these activities into the curriculum forces students to leave their comfort zones and venture into areas where answers are not always clear-cut. To maximize engagement and reduce anxiety over grades, assessment of these activities is holistic and heavily weighted towards effort. This, in turn, produces an environment where students feel free to take intellectual risks and to exercise their critical thinking skills. Moreover, since each student learns differently, utilizing a mix of teaching techniques ensures that every student has an opportunity to learn in a way best suited for him or her. This approach enables students to learn not only the course material, but also to sharpen their higher-level critical thinking and synthesis skills.

If a course is to help students become critical thinkers and contributors to society, students must be able to make connections between various streams of information. Stated differently, they should have the ability to link coursework to real world issues. For example, in Introduction to Economics, I relate topics such as supply and demand to questions such as: *Why is the U.S. Postal Service having financial issues?* and *What are the pros and cons of having a minimum wage?* In my Intermediate Microeconomics course, I expect students to master both the mathematics of the models and the related economic intuition. Students must understand, for example, the traditional representation of the Slutsky equation, which models changes in demand for a good as a price response (substitution effect) and income response (income effect). However, they should also be able to articulate the role that these concepts play in the design and function of public programs such as Social Security. To stimulate this type of thinking, as I walk students through concepts and exercises, I constantly ask “Why are we doing this?” or “What does this accomplish?” and have students respond in their own words. By keeping students actively engaged in their learning in this manner, student learning outcomes are enhanced.

Finally, constant and consistent assessment of student learning is vital to ensuring that these skills are being developed. During courses, in addition to the standard tools such as exams and problem sets, I use one-minute papers, quizzes, and mid-semester evaluations to gauge learning. With this information, I can adapt my teaching in real time as needed. Long term, I consider my teaching effective if, after a course, students have learned enough to have an ability to critically engage with economics-related articles in publications such as *The Wall Street Journal* or *The Economist*, as this indicates development of essential critical thinking and synthesis skills that will lead to success in many aspects of their lives. As a result, students will be equipped to work through various challenges in their professional careers and to thrive in all their future endeavors.