

# Teaching Statement

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In my first year of graduate school I was a teaching assistant for a teaching legend: Dr. Gerry Swanson. He captivated students with amazing stories that were so interesting that the story can be recalled much later to demonstrate an economic concept. As his TA I held office hours but few students showed. I took the opportunity to present the material in my own way, for an audience of two or three. Over time a few more students came. By the time the final exam was around the corner, I had 60 students stuffed into a 50-student room. My heart was racing; it was an exhilarating experience. After that I always had teaching on my mind. If I am traveling and the plane is delayed, can this be turned into a story to demonstrate allocation of a scarce resource? Absolutely. The core of my class I am sharing experiences that are enlightened by economics. To this I add current events and student participation to create a learning environment that students enjoy and learn from.

One of the best things about teaching economics is how well it explains reality, once we realize the true incentives in place. I am always shocked when a discussion with a very intelligent colleague from another department makes a statement that is clearly counter to economic intuition covered in an introductory course such as: 'It is an outrage that the price of Heirloom tomatoes is high just because people like them so much!' Then ensues an explanation of suppliers and substitutes and the world is again at peace thanks to supply and demand models. In my classes I have taken to using news articles to motivate the material we are covering. Doing so gives students the feeling of learning how much of reality works and the ability to predict future outcomes, making the concepts more than required material but instead a powerful tool of understanding.

For example, NPR's Plant Money podcast recently released an episode about Vince Kosuga who became known as The Onion King. He was able to acquire 98% of the crop of onions, effectively changing the market structure from perfect competition to a monopoly. The number of onions remained the same, so why did the price jump when one person owned nearly all of them? I believe that using this motivation for studying market structure is motivating for students, but also helps students to recall the topic in the future by attaching a story to it. The book *Made to Stick* notes how effective stories are at lodging ideas into our minds for future reference, and influences how I design my classes to make the material easier to retain. I adopted this teaching philosophy from Professor Gerry Swanson, whom I assisted in my first year of graduate school. To this day I can recall at least a dozen of his stories that served as examples for the topic of the day.

I come from an undergraduate institution with small classes, and I very much enjoy the environment of gaining personal connections with students and having good discussions in class. When I teach small classes I offer an interview activity where students set a time to meet with me in a mock interview format where they are applying for whichever job seems most fitting to them. I find that students enjoy the experience and find it very useful, but also I can use it to get to know them and the background that has brought them to where they are, and students usually participate in class noticeably more after the interview than before.

During my time at The University of Arizona I served as a teaching assistant for large classes, which taught me a great deal about class management. I became Head TA for two classes of 700 students each semester and was in charge of ensuring that online grades and assignments, as well as the daily routine of such large classes went smoothly. I also coordinated several other TA's and preceptors in order to have a quick turnaround on assignments and exams. In doing so I learned how to design assignments and exams that are fitting for large classes, and became more comfortable teaching in front of hundreds of students during review sessions.

Another tool I have found useful is providing online videos. I taught an online winter class, where an entire semester worth of material was condensed into only three weeks. Rather than give students a book and tell them to read a chapter each day, I made videos where I explained what I wanted them to know. I received very positive feedback about the videos, and despite the fact that they were not of the best quality due to the time constraint, I have continued to receive positive feedback on YouTube and currently have 20,000 views- mostly from students who are not in my classes. What students say they appreciate most about the videos is the freedom to pause and work through the problem, and to do it repeatedly. Videos also create greater access to students whose other obligations make it difficult to attend office hours. I would also like to create online practice quizzes for students to test themselves and get instant feedback.

As I increase my programming skills, I would like to bridge the gap between economics education and games. Most games have economics at their core, but I would like to make it more explicit, noting the concepts and using game-design strategies to make practicing economics more fun while retaining the educational benefits.

Teaching is something I love to do, but I know that there is room for improvement. I am looking forward to creating innovative ways of teaching economics and creating a learning environment that is enjoyable for students while maintaining the rigor they expect from a college course. My enthusiasm for teaching and creative approach will benefit students and drive me to continue to improve.