

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Thang Quang Nguyen

Department of Economics, University of Texas at Austin, qnguyen@eco.utexas.edu

Webpage: <http://www.thangnguyen.info/>

I have been always fascinated with teaching economics. I enjoy passing on interesting economic concepts, learning from the surprising questions and curiosity of students, and hopefully making a difference in someone's life. I developed my teaching philosophy based on my own experience both as a student and an instructor in a liberal arts context.

My teaching objectives are about what the students will achieve. First, I think that the quality is more important than quantity of learning. After each course, I expect my students to understand the fundamental concepts and critical features of economic models rather than to memorize all that has been covered. In addition, the knowledge that they have acquired should be a working one, i.e. the students should be able to apply what they have learned to other related classes and real-world situations. Second, I believe that critical and creative thinking skills are very important for the students' intellectual growth. Facing modified problems, students should be able to notice the differences and come up with their own solutions. In other words, I am in favor of problem solving rather than fact learning. Third, I expect my students to acquire more learning skills. Each course is an intermediate link in one's learning sequence. That means the students have an additional opportunity to improve their learning methods, which helps them in future courses or independent research. Fourth, I believe that helping students enhance their vision in economics will be helpful for their career growth. After all, I believe, we need the big picture to know where we are and in what direction we want to progress. Some students, who specialize in economics, need to know about options for professional development. Others will need to know how economics is useful in business, government, etc.

To implement those objectives, I will rely on several tools and accompanying principles. First, I view syllabi, assignments, and exams as vital tools for communicating my targeted content. I will specify my emphases in the syllabi and repeatedly refer to these. In addition, practice and exam questions should give the students opportunities to use their acquired concepts and methods. Second, I strongly believe in active learning. This requires a comfortable and inspiring environment in which the students can benefit from reading the materials, searching for data, discussing problems, criticizing approaches, and thinking independently. Group work with open-topic projects will encourage these activities. In addition, I will ask straightforward and interesting questions during classes to make the students feel confident in using new concepts, creating an atmosphere for interactive learning. Third, I believe in adaptive teaching, actively seeking feedback from the students and updating teaching tools. Feedback channels can be the outcomes of assignments and exams, classroom interactions, and outside-classroom exchanges. I greatly value talking to my students because that helps me to know them better and find efficient ways to communicate economics. Besides students' feedback, I will rely on other sources, such as my colleagues' advice and my own research findings.

Finally, the current ingredients in my teaching philosophy are not constants. My teaching philosophy will evolve over time so that I can better meet the students' needs.