Teaching Philosophy – Olga Bogach
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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My passion for teaching was one of the main determinants in my decision to pursue a Ph.D. in Economics. I have great enthusiasm for the subject matter, clear and effective communication skills, and a commitment to meet the needs of every student. I believe that basic topics representing the essence of the course should be covered thoroughly, practically, and most importantly, in a way that is relevant to today’s complex economic problems. While mathematical theory drives the solutions to our models, I believe the most useful ability is for students to be able to apply economic tools of analysis to find answers to questions and know how to implement the solutions.

In my teaching, I rely on a set of principles, which I constantly strive to improve:

i) Clear and well-organized course structure

I believe that the best learning environment for the students is the one that is well organized and structured. Hence, from the first day of class, I provide a specific outline of the course and set clear expectations for the upcoming semester. I ensure that the students understand class requirements thoroughly and have the tools to succeed.

ii) Relevance and concrete examples

The content of economics courses ideally incorporates current economic events and changes in the social environment. Linking the syllabus to present economic incidents helps students to better understand the concrete benefits of the course and its relevance. For example, in my macroeconomics courses, I regularly take time to discuss relevant current issues and developments in the U.S. and the global economy. In my teaching, I also inspire students to understand how economic tools can address global issues of inequity, injustice, and inefficiency.

I also believe that it is important to use concrete examples in explaining core economic concepts. My goal is that students do not only learn the functioning of the taught principles but also discover and understand when they can use them. For instance, one may motivate students to understand the backward induction method by telling them that it is helpful in anticipating the decisions of friends, colleagues, or even biological evolution and arms races.

iii) Student-centered approach

I take a student-centered approach to teaching and design my courses flexibly to adapt to the interests and needs of the class. I use a wide range of teaching tools and sensitively alternate lectures with classroom experiments and games, short video clips, group projects, and student presentations. This keeps students’ energy levels high and promotes active learning. I am friendly and make myself available to meet with students one-on-one or promptly answer their questions by email. I take students’ feedback seriously and adjust my courses accordingly.
I have a particular commitment to tackling issues of diversity in the classroom. My students at the University of Hawai’i come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and I enjoy incorporating their varied perspectives into my curriculum. For example, one of the assignments in my international trade and globalization class was to research and present about trade composition of a student’s native country. This allowed the students to view economic principles through a prism of their unique cultural backgrounds.

I understand that the role of a teacher goes beyond classroom instruction and involves guiding students into a life of learning through role modeling and mentorship. In addition to teaching economics, I strive to foster inquisitive, open minds in my students while instilling in them life lessons and values that will last through their adult lives.