

## **Statement of Teaching Philosophy – Stephen J. Cotten**

I aim to develop students' ability to use the analytical tools of economics to make more reasoned decisions—from purchasing choices to voting for president. Directly imparting knowledge is required and important; however, fostering the critical thinking skills of students is vastly more valuable. As such, my objective is to develop their knowledge of economic reasoning and evaluate their application of that reasoning to relevant issues. To achieve this goal, I present students with interesting problems that spark their curiosity, explain how such problems can be divided into a series of simple questions, and then teach the economic tools needed to answer those questions.

I use all available resources to improve learning. Students have different learning styles. As such, I present material in a variety of ways. I attempt to explain verbally anything I present visually, and I provide intuitive explanations and analogies for anything mathematical. I am very comfortable using technology to enhance instruction and am proficient with utilizing online course management software (e.g. Blackboard, WebCT) to ease access to course material and facilitate additional communication. In my opinion, technology makes it easier to teach to multiple learning styles. While it cannot replace hands-on instruction, it can be used to improve the delivery of course content so that the breadth and depth of coverage can be increased.

I encourage class participation in all of my courses. I use my experience with experimental economics to conduct a number of interactive demonstrations to motivate material and to bring students into contact with current research. In smaller classes, I divide students into groups based on their preferences and have them debate their positions on current policy issues using course material as the basis for their arguments. By linking course material to current events, it becomes more relevant and avoids turning students off with too much abstraction.

I maintain high academic standards for my students. It appears that many university graduates lack strong written communication skills. To address this, I frequently require a series of concise, one-page maximum papers throughout a course. Confining the paper length forces students to synthesize information into a compact memo-like document, as future employers will require of them. I often find that students are surprised as they see in their first paper how much of their writing failed to advance their argument. I expect and typically see great improvement in subsequent assignments. I assess students primarily on their ability to use their analytical skills and economic tools to answer unfamiliar problems. By the end of a course, I expect students, using the tools they acquired in class, to be able to logically and reasonably answer a question they have never before been asked.

I maintain high standards for myself and believe in staying on the forefront of research and technology. By doing so, I can engage students with material relevant to current events. This arms them with the best tools for solving problems that they face both today and in the future. To achieve this, I believe in constantly furthering my own education through research and outside study. I hope to illustrate the benefits of a comprehensive education by integrating cutting-edge technology and real-world knowledge into my instruction, providing an example for my students to emulate. I measure my success in teaching not only in imparting the required information to my students, but also in providing them with the knowledge to apply economic reasoning to a broad array of topics. Upon leaving my instruction, they should be able to support their beliefs and decisions in a manner consistent with the highest standards of intellectual discourse and academic honesty.