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## Teaching Statement

Learning is best when it's focused on student engagement. From active learning to group work to classes built around conversations and questions, this fundamental insight forms the foundation of my teaching philosophy.

My classes are best described as conversational lectures—I usually begin with a puzzle or question, and regularly pause to ask more questions, allowing me to build on students' experiences and the previous topics we've covered. By writing everything down on the board, I'm forced to slow down so students don't feel the need to mindlessly record what's said and they have time to digest and ask follow-up questions, allowing us to unpack and analyze the idea in question. A genuine dialogue develops; it is the best way for an idea to become truly theirs, so students take it with them long after class is over.

My economics students develop these critical thinking skills by answering everyday puzzles. Why are philosophy majors typically paid the same as Spanish and French majors, even though foreign language majors have a clear specialized skill they've learned? Why are keyboards organized with common letters, like most vowels, inconveniently located at the top? Why do coupons exist? These are just some of the puzzles I pose to students that I use as a jumping off point for a discussion into an important concept. As part of their economic naturalist assignment, they come up with their own puzzle and answer it using a concept from the class. They learn to apply ideas and evaluate the world, guided in part by previous student essays I assign as reading.

Practice helps cement understanding. I set aside class time for students can work in small groups and work through practice problems I've created. My review sessions are dominated by me posing questions to the group and students using digital response clickers to submit their answers. After reviewing how the class voted, they break into small groups and, as when they work on practice problems without the clickers, I walk among them answering questions.

Small group practice work allows students to develop a sense of how much material they understand and how good their notes are. At the same time, it addresses the challenges of teaching to students who grasp the material at different times. Well-performing students benefit because they strengthen their knowledge as they take the lead in discussing the solution. At the same time, struggling students gain helpful explanations from someone who has recently learned the material. Students particularly enjoy these techniques and I find it very useful for assessing which areas need additional clarification. Some of my best moments as an educator have been at these sessions when a look of realization flashes across a student's face.

I believe in active learning whenever possible. To reinforce our conversations, I employ a variety of activities and techniques that illustrate class concepts so students are not merely writing down ideas. I want them to discover the concepts whenever possible. For example, I assign students as buyers or sellers to re-create economics' foundational supply and demand model. I set up an auction with beans and then change how many beans students have to illustrate how increasing the money supply causes inflation. My students learn actively—knowledge is better understood when discovered and not merely told.

I've integrated Excel into my business statistics course to provide more opportunities for active learning. It required a major overhaul of the course, but it was worth it. Showing students Excel

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instead of dragging the class through the droll of calculation frees up time to show them why the equations are set up the way they are and reinforces tricky ideas that Excel can't do for them. For their paper, my statistics students form their own hypothesis and test them by running regressions of their own design, something that couldn't work if they had to do regression calculations by hand.

Focusing on Excel has another advantage: they develop confidence and skills with a program that's the standard in so many organizations. While business students take computer applications, they find this additional Excel practice to be incredibly valuable. Every semester, at least one student mentions how the class helped with their job or another class. One student credited the Excel-focused nature of course with landing them a better-paying job, which enabled them to save their G.I. bill for graduate school. In his words, my statistics class taught him "a skill that helped me land a job that has changed my path entirely."

Learning does not end at the classroom door and I'm a big believer in giving students multiple way to practice and perfect their understanding. Beyond being available via GroupMe, e-mail, and office hours, I make out-of-class resources available to students so I can make the most of our in-class time. I written practice exams so students can take the practice exam as if it's an actual exam, and then use the detailed key to check their work.

I also post my comprehensive lecture notes, allowing students to participate in the discussion rather than feeling pressure to record every word of what's being discussed. The lecture notes are also invaluable for students who miss a class for reasons beyond their control and provides an additional study resource for them. Because I want to make the material as easy and accessible as possible, I put my notes and practice exams on my own personal website ([dyoungberg.com](http://dyoungberg.com)) so students don't have to login to Blackboard or worry about Blackboard interruption. I've been told that even students who aren't currently taking one of my classes will reference my notes because they find this additional resource so useful.

I'm constantly developing more practice options. Student evaluations encouraged me to write a second set of practice exams and answer keys for my principles of macroeconomics class. My statistics students also requested additional work which is why that course has two practice exams for each exam and an additional 76 practice questions with detailed keys, organized by concept to make it easier for students to find work that'll help them.

Both economics and statistics have an unfavorable reputation in the minds of most people. Economics is seen as a dry, heartless discipline, concerned only with money and financial markets which is why I take pains to show how it can be fun and widely applicable. Statistics is seen as impossibly difficult—akin to something like Ancient Egyptian calculus. And while it's true that statistics is hard, it's not insurmountable to anyone. That's why I do whatever I can to make it as approachable as possible, and give so many opportunities to practice. Dispelling these misconceptions about economics and statistics requires thoughtful conversations and lots of practice and that's the essence of my approach to teaching.