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Teaching has always been a passion of mine. My first job was teaching dance classes in my hometown, and I have had opportunities over the years to share my knowledge and excitement for dance, math, and economics. Teaching has always come naturally to me, and from my experience as a student, teaching assistant, and tutor, I have had a plethora of opportunities to learn different methods and styles. Over my decades of teaching, I learn something new with each interaction and have put time into exploring educational research and techniques to implement.

The teaching of economics requires a deep understanding of the theory, its application, its mathematical underpinnings, and the audience. While I believe that upper division courses should be mathematically rigorous, courses should first and foremost be accessible and interesting to students. For example, a deep understanding of econometric theory through proofs of bias is less important than understanding the concept of bias and being able to recognize it in applications and understand how that would change our conclusion from a study. Economics is a fascinating subject in that it teaches us about how the world works. Students should come away from a course with more than an understanding of the course material. They should have an idea of how they can use that in their lives, whether in their own decision making or through skills they can bring to a workplace.

I always offer students opportunities to push themselves. When I taught energy economics, the students played a game lasting most of the quarter which tested how well they understood electricity markets and market power. It was a relatively small part of their grade, but it pushed them to apply what we were learning throughout the quarter. It was difficult, but there were students who played it fantastically and really enjoyed the challenge. I would ideally use this game as part of an honors section for the course, as it was frustrating for students who struggled with the course material, and I can understand their frustration.

In my opinion, the most important thing to remember when teaching is to have a growth mindset, focusing on students working toward a better understanding over the term. For this reason, I test understanding early and often, preferring regular quizzes to one or two midterms. Students should not have to wonder where they are at in their comprehension. This creates room to learn and grow. Watching a student solve a problem or answer a question they could not before is what teaching is about. To account for this, I create room in my grading scheme by giving more weight to later grades if a student improves as the term progresses. I also reiterate material as it relates to later course topics, always focusing on building a foundation of understanding.

When I applied to graduate school, my parents wondered why I did not want to become a teacher. It was obvious to them that I excel at teaching, and while graduate school tried its best, it has been where I prefer to focus my energy. My effort has not gone unnoticed. I received the award given to an outstanding teaching assistant in the Economics Department in 2017. I also was chosen to lead the Department's How to Teach Economics course in 2018. What was clear to my parents many years ago is clear to everyone around me: my comparative advantage and my happiness lie in the classroom.