

Teaching Statement

I think of economics fundamentally as the study of choice. Learning economics is useful for making rational choices when people face various constraints, alternatives, and trade-offs. For this reason, my goal in teaching economics is not simply to make students memorize economic concepts or learn how to solve a particular set of problems. I want them to develop a critical way of thinking they can apply to many decisions in their daily lives.

My teaching experiences in Korea and in the United States made me think carefully about how to pursue this goal. In Korea, I was accustomed to classrooms where the instructor writes lecture material on the board, students just quietly copy and paste it by hand, and much of the learning happens through homework, mostly solving practice problems in the textbook. Students have little room to ask questions in this setting. When I began teaching in the United States, I taught the same way as I did in Korea. It didn't take so much time until I realized that the classroom was totally different from Korea. Students were much more willing to ask questions and be involved in class.

Each country's education culture has its own pros and cons. However, these experiences taught me that students do not necessarily approach the same material in the same way at the same speed. To help every student understand the economic concept, I had to learn to explain the same concept using different examples and tools. For example, I explain the economic intuition in simple words. Sometimes I use graphs and mathematical expressions to explain the same thing. Specific real-life examples and problem-solving exercises also enhance students' understanding. I also want students to handle these different representations. A student who can manipulate a mathematical expression well but cannot explain its economic meaning has not yet fully understood the concept. Neither has a student who understands the intuition but cannot apply it to a new problem. In exams, I have evaluated students' understanding by testing all types of problems, such as asking for a simple description of the concept, drawing a graph, and solving the model mathematically.

Teaching has also taught me that maintaining high academic standards and being a gentle teacher are compatible. Early in my teaching in the United States, I realized that some students were having difficulty keeping up with the course. Rather than lowering the class standard, I extended my office hours and worked closely with those who needed extra help. What they needed was not always the same. For some students, I returned to the basics and explained it differently. For others, we worked through problem-solving together. Sometimes the most useful conversation was not about a particular economic concept at all, but about study strategy.

I have one particular student in my mind to this day. She changed the way I think about academic performance and learning potential. The student did poorly on the midterm but kept coming for help instead of giving up on herself. We worked together over time on concepts, problem-solving, and study strategies. By the final exam, the student earned one of the highest scores in the class and ultimately received a strong final letter grade. This experience reinforced my teaching philosophy: a student's performance at one point during a semester does not necessarily define how much the student can grow. To encourage all students to keep up the good work until the final exam and not withdraw mid-semester, I implemented an evaluation system that weighs the higher of the midterm and final exam scores. Through this evaluation structure, students who did poorly on the midterm can overturn it and get a good score ultimately on the final exam as long as they don't give up. My ideal classroom is where every good effort counts, and academic integrity ultimately wins.

This is what having high expectations for students and believing in their growth potential means to me.

It means being patient and enduring with them. I want to be there with students and try my best for them as long as they want to learn and grow.

Teaching has also made me a better student of economics. Explaining a concept to someone often reveals gaps in my knowledge that I had not previously noticed. In order to teach better, I inevitably had to study more. I learned that teaching begets learning, and learning begets teaching again. I am still learning how to become a better teacher. Different groups of students create different classrooms, and no single teaching method will always work in the same way. In that sense, teaching will never end. I look forward to interacting with students in my future class.