

Jay K. Walker
Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Alfred Marshall stated, “Economics is the business of man in his everyday life.” I believe this statement is absolutely true. Scarcity is a fundamental part of the human condition. We face limited resources and unlimited wants regardless of our position and background. A broader understanding of this simple fact is needed, and one I try to impress upon students. There has not been a course I have taken or taught where I have not learned something, and I personally try to grow and learn every day. My interest in new ideas and concepts, which is not always limited to economics, I believe comes through in my courses.

Making the material relevant and thought provoking I also personally strive for. Although students may not agree with the results or implications from a model or concept being discussed, I always try to give all sides of an issue and encourage critical thinking skills. Presenting information in an unbiased fashion and allowing students to make up their own minds is of great importance to me. Many individuals have had a course where the instructor would present personal opinions as fact, and is a certain way to alienate those who may not agree in the belief expressed and hinder students’ progress through material.

Most students who enroll in economics courses are not destined for careers in economics, although applying the tools and concepts to everyday life can improve decision making. Economics can offer insight on who to marry, where to go on vacation, how much to save for retirement, and whether you should skip the gym on your way home. I hope to present material and facilitate discussions in such a way that economics can help students in many areas of their lives. In a world where we all face scarcity and trade offs, economics offers a unique opportunity to stress the development of critical thinking skills.

In today’s technological landscape, it is imperative to incorporate online resources and techniques to allow students to search and discover on their own. Recommending outside sources and involving resources available online allows for a continuance of learning long after each course is over. Most learning goes on outside of the classroom, and I try to instill the idea that students can learn far more on their own than what we will be able to cover in a course that only lasts a few weeks. If you tell someone what to think they will forget in time or just change their mind to match the next “expert opinion” they hear. If you aid them in how to use the economic way of thinking your impact can last a lifetime. One of the best things an instructor can experience is to see interest in economics or encourage the imagination of an individual to learn more on their own.

I have taught nine different courses across both undergraduate and graduate levels and across macroeconomic and microeconomic subject areas. As a graduate student I taught extensively as an adjunct in different schools and to students of vastly different academic and socioeconomic backgrounds. I enjoy working with students and have served as an advisor to social student organizations, official academic groups, and successfully completed published academic research with undergraduates. I enjoy working with students both within and outside the classroom. I chose this career specifically in order to be in the collegiate academic environment and working with students on academic research is an integral part of that experience.