

# DAVID M. K. KNAPP

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS ~ PH. D. CANDIDATE

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## TEACHING STATEMENT

I have **taught more than 500 economics students** during **11 semesters** with **21 separate classes**. In addition, I have **tutored well over 100 economics students**, and written the solution manual for an introductory economics textbook. While I have a significant amount of experience in the classroom, I believe there is still a great deal more that I can learn in order to improve my teaching. It has been in the course of teaching that I have been tested the most, whether it is as I stand before a 100 student review session taking questions in rapid succession, or during one-on-one meetings with students to diagnose their misunderstandings. My perspective on how to teach is borne out of a mixture of experiences: in the classroom, while tutoring, and from my own personal experience learning how to learn.

My website provides additional information including a statement of teaching effectiveness, complete listing of the evaluations, and the original documents: [daveknapp.info](http://daveknapp.info).

### Teaching Interests

I would prefer to teach courses on labor economics, econometrics, and retirement, as these complement my research interests. My teaching has been traditionally focused on the core introductory and intermediate undergraduate microeconomic theory and introductory macroeconomic theory courses. I am happy teaching these courses as well.

My comparative advantage is in courses where motivated students must surmount challenging economic concepts within a short semester given limited past knowledge. As students often note in my evaluations, the class notes I provide complement and clarify the lecture, while my additional practice problems help them understand the concepts they need to improve. While my preference is for teaching courses closer to my research, I receive great personal satisfaction from helping students appreciate how core economic courses can improve how one learns, analyzes, and solves new and abstract questions.

### Teaching Philosophy

Everyone has different philosophies of teaching, and most focus on clear presentation, providing examples of economic theory in reality, monitoring student progress, having a good relationship with students, and encouraging class participation. I agree with all of these ideas, and I think most teachers would; however, implementation of these broad ideas is often what separates the effective instructors. I continue to experiment with different ways of motivating students and the balance between lecture and practice. For example, while quizzes served as good motivation for students to do homework at the University of Michigan, it was not successful at Albion College. Public Health masters students figured out material faster in small group meetings where they could trade off their misunderstandings, where this method was less successful among undergraduates in intermediate microeconomics who often steered each other down the wrong path. My range of teaching experiences has generally led me to the belief that the best thing an instructor can do is **be flexible to the class** he is endowed with. A sampling of the principles I use to improve the breadth and quality of my students' learning include:

*Encourage students to "Learn what it is that you do not know"*

Countless times a student has announced to me: "I read the book, and I understand the idea, but I don't understand the question on the practice test." Practice questions reveal to students the gaps in their understanding that are generally missed in the initial reading of the material, or the introduction of the

concept in lecture. As a result, it is important to mix in plentiful opportunities for students to learn that their current level of understanding might be incomplete. This can be done with practice tests, targeted questions, and frequent examples. I always try to revisit the notion that learning is a continuing process that even I as the instructor am undergoing. I encourage students to frequently challenge themselves to learn what it is they do not know by writing out their explanations, doing practice tests, or teaching the concepts to a classmate. Once they learn where they are confused, I encourage them to fill in the gap by talking with classmates, going to office hours, and I always make myself available by email.

*Mixed methods appeal to different learning styles.*

Students learn differently, both within a class and across different schools and universities. I mix lecturing with ample in class practice of sample questions and detailed class notes that repeat core concepts described in-class. I then introduce different questions for homework and encourage students to attend my office hours and review sessions (I generally offer at least two per exam). Since some students learn best from one another, I encourage the formation of study groups, and encourage students to teach concepts to one another so that they can challenge each other's understanding. While no one method is perfect, I believe offering a breadth of in-class and online material helps provide each student with a variety of tools so that he or she can choose the method that works best for them.

*Environment drives the type of questions to ask.*

The environment that a question is asked in can determine if it is a learning instrument, or a false validation to the instructor that his or her teaching is successful. Asking general questions in a large lecture typically results in a quiet room or the best student responding (e.g. "Why is demand downward sloping?"). In large lectures, narrow and incremental questions can help guide students understanding, encourage broader class participation, and provide less biased feedback for the instructor (e.g. "If prices are higher, would a consumer be willing to buy more or less of a good?"). I learned from individually tutoring over 100 students in one-on-one environments, the instructor must act like a diagnostician to understand the gaps in his student's knowledge by asking specific questions and waiting for an answer, because this prevents a student from feigning that he or she has greater knowledge (e.g. "Walk me through your reasoning why demand is downward sloping"). If an instructor learns the common gaps in a student's understanding early, then he can prevent this issue from cascading into broader confusion later.

Teaching is not a static process. It is dynamic, and as an instructor I am continuously reflecting on my students' progress and my ability to convey the material in a way that is meaningful beyond the class. I do not claim to be the best teacher, but I am a teacher that, each semester, joins his students in learning.