The billions of stars shimmering in the night sky are the most beautiful and the most daunting sight in the world. As a child I was fascinated by the enormity of its vastness, overwhelmed by the extent of knowledge that still eluded me, and aroused by the desire to discover unknowns, all at the same time. Now as a teacher, I aim to instill those same feelings to my students in the classroom.

My philosophy of teaching is influenced by the liberal arts education I received as an undergraduate. First, I believe that learning should enhance students’ rational thinking and intellectual curiosity beyond any particular subject; and second, I believe teaching is ultimately about making students discover the inherent pleasure in finding out things. At the University of Michigan, I taught principle course in Microeconomics, where over half the students each semester came from a non-economics background such as chemistry, engineering, and sports management. While I found this diversity in the classroom challenging at first for teaching purposes, I found ways to accommodate them. I used graphical analysis, mathematical formulas, and real world examples to explain fundamental economic theories in a simple and intuitive way. I found that engineering students found mathematical approach more intuitive, while economics students preferred graphical analysis and the rest learned better through practical applications. In the end, the three different approaches complemented one another and helped students form a strong conceptual foundation of economics, and the presence of non-economics students enhanced the intellectual environment we created because they brought unique perspectives to the classroom discussion.

As the primary instructor of the course in Spring 2011, I was able to develop my own syllabus that motivated students to apply what they learnt in class to issues such as education and health policy. I tried to create a classroom environment where students felt comfortable building their own intellectual voice, by encouraging criticism of existing economic principles and by letting them debate theoretical predictions. Listening to arguments that are
different from one’s own, made my students appreciate the complexity of the issues, strengthen their own beliefs, and respect the opposing views.

At the Academic Resource Center in Ohio Wesleyan University, I tutored students struggling in Mathematics courses by identifying their problems and devising alternative ways to explain material. Through this experience, I have come to believe that every student has their own way of internalizing material and that even the weakest students can understand problems if teachers are able to present materials in a manner to which their students can relate. Economics is great for this because teachers have many options such as graphs, mathematical equations, and real world examples at their disposal.

My teaching experience has been an important part of my graduate study. At the personal level, my intellectual pursuit that started underneath the night sky has brought me to an economics classroom where I see my students experience the same emotions of anxiety, curiosity, and appreciation of intellectual ideas that I first felt as a child. More importantly, I hope that through my enthusiasm for teaching, my students are also fueled to pursue a journey of their own in the future.