

Teaching Philosophy

Anna Maximova*

Personal Website: <http://annamaximova.weebly.com/>

Saint Mary's E-mail: am72@stmarys-ca.edu

Contents

1 Teaching Philosophy

2 Professional Development

2.1	Teaching Experience
2.2	Honors & Awards
2.3	Teaching Conferences

*Anna Maximova, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Economics at St. Mary's College of California. Email: am72@stmarys-ca.edu

1 Teaching Philosophy

I've always wanted to pursue an academic career. I come from a family of three generations of professors in various fields, and it only seemed logical for me to become one myself. I was fortunate, growing up, to have many examples of what a great professor, teacher and mentor could be, set by both of my grandparents, my father, aunt and uncle, all of whom are professors in various fields, ranging from history and languages to physics and economics. I have attended their academic lectures many times growing up and I have aspired to become a professor myself ever since.

I have also been fortunate to have taken classes from passionate and inspiring faculty throughout my undergraduate and graduate academic career. One thing that struck me the most about all their lectures is that they were all very successful and effective teachers in various fields, yet they had very different pedagogical styles. This made me realize that there is no perfect teacher or pedagogical style, rather it is the individuality of the instructor, which makes their subject interesting to the students. I would describe my personal teaching goal as being an instructor who acknowledges the individuality of each and every student, and helps them gain a new perspective on economics, encouraging critical thinking and helping them realize the diversity of views and opinions.

As an international person, having grown up in a post-Soviet republic of Belarus, and an immigrant, I am able to offer my students a different perspective on the subject of economics. A unique view of the U.S. market economy from someone who experienced the inefficiencies and hardships of the command economy. I think this unique experience and expertise makes me a valuable asset to any economics department. Overall, I would describe myself as an instructor who acknowledges the individuality of each and every student. My intention is not to change my students, but accept them for who they are, and merely help them gain a new perspective on the subject of economics. Presenting the material in a way which allows my students to challenge economics, while providing guidance and structure along the way, is a teaching strategy I frequently use in my classroom. I believe structure is necessary, especially when teaching predominantly freshmen in my principles classes. However, I do allow my students the independence to form and safely share their individual opinions, which allows the students to develop critical thinking (analytical) skills, much needed in the field of economics.

Teaching the students to care about their work and intermittently provide feedback on their academic performance is important. I encourage the students to be prepared for every class, be ready to discuss and question, challenge each other with thought-provoking ideas and critically think about various economic and social problems, in the hope that they may realize that there might be more than one viewpoint or opinion on any given subject. Creating an environment where students feel safe, encouraged to participate in discussions, voice their diverse opinions and know that others will demonstrate respect is also one of my primary teaching priorities. Such a safe classroom environment facilitates learning and ensures students are comfortable sharing their viewpoints, resulting in an insightful classroom debate. I strive to be a mentor to my students and prepare them to navigate the world outside of the classroom (college) setting, by teaching them to be considerate and responsible about the choices they make not only in their professional career but their personal life as well.

To date I have taught various sections and levels of economics classes ranging from intro-

ductory macro- and microeconomics courses, filled with freshmen, to intermediate macro (micro)economics, money and banking, international trade, business statistics courses comprised of mostly juniors and seniors. I have also, occasionally, taught some graduate level economics courses. Regardless of the depth of the economics content covered in an introductory versus an intermediate level course, I encourage discussion and hope the students question and propose alternative ways of solving many ongoing economic problems.

Having taught at a small liberal arts institution, immersed in its Catholic and Lasallian traditions has been an amazing experience. Pursuing liberal arts education is a continuous process of inquiry and discovery, leading the way to uncovering patterns and ideas previously obscured by appearances and imperfect information. Immersion in the liberal arts tradition therefore, allows the student to probe and critically investigate the unknown, acquiring a deeper understanding of the phenomena in question and becoming an informed decision maker. Economics is a social science and, unlike business and finance, which focus on how to manage a business organization and invest money, economics seeks to better understand and predict human behavior and interactions. The field of economics is also relatively new and oftentimes intertwined with fields like politics, sociology, anthropology, business, and finance, making many economic concepts difficult to grasp. Yet, most people make various economic decisions on a daily basis, sometimes without even noticing or fully understanding their actions and implications on others. Economics is concerned with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in a market system. Limited resources and unlimited wants and desires of our society result in competition, which may generate market outcomes deemed desirable or undesirable from an overall social point of view. Studying economics allows for a deeper understanding of the individual's decision making process and that of others around them and proves to be both intellectually satisfying and of great practical importance. Most economic classes begin with the study of how markets work. To better understand complex market structures economists rely on models and conceptual simplifications of market processes to identify observable market outcomes. Economic models serve as benchmarks, guiding further inquiries into the causal nature of various market outcomes and, as such, are consistent with the liberal arts approach to understanding the complexities of reality. In addition to teaching models and theory, economics introduces students to powerful and relevant tools of inquiry using statistical and mathematical methods. Economies continuously generate a plethora of data, which requires further detailed understanding and analysis. Strong understanding and command of research methods is necessary in order to complete meaningful inquiries about economic phenomena. All of my courses are designed in a way which provides ample opportunities for communication through class discussions, projects and paper assignments. Students learn to search for economic meaning collectively through class discussions, during which they learn the art of persuasion and become aware of diversity of opinions on any given subject. I consider the development of these skills a high priority in the context of a liberal arts mission. Consistent with the liberal arts mission of the College, economics degree places a strong emphasis on data driven analysis, critical thinking skills and provides the students with a competitive edge in their pursuit of internships and job opportunities upon graduation.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to teach so many different courses and to have met a diverse group of students during my teaching experience. Despite the many challenges and recent changes to online mode of instruction, being a professor, working closely with my

students in and out of the classroom, is one of the most rewarding experiences I have had in my life so far. I look forward to the many challenges and new exciting teaching experiences which lie ahead.

2 Professional Development

2.1 Teaching Experience

Saint Mary's College of California, Moraga, CA
Assistant Professor (2017-present)

North Central College, Naperville, IL
Visiting Assistant Professor (2016-2017)

2.2 Honors & Awards

Saint Mary's College of California
Outstanding Teacher Award (2020)
Professor of the Game (Baseball) Honorary Award (2019)
President's Scholar-Athlete Faculty Mentor Award (2018, 2019, 2020)

University of Kentucky
Department of Economics Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award (2016)
Delta Zeta Sorority Professor of the Month, University of Kentucky (2014)

2.3 Teaching Conferences

CTREE Conference (May 2019)

Discussant

University of Kentucky Teaching Conference (2013-2016)

Attendee

Southern Economic Association (November 2015)

Presenter and Discussant

Kentucky Economic Association (October 2015)

Presenter