

Teaching Philosophy

Dr. Moon Oulatta

After receiving my PhD in economics in 2018, I spent the next four years teaching economics to both undergraduate and graduate students, while focusing extensively on research. As a result, the short, but robust experience that I have acquired in teaching advanced courses in economics and conducting applied research gave me an opportunity to develop a teaching philosophy that emphasizes practical lectures, strong quantitative research methods, and promotes enhancing students' professional development capacities (especially, in finance and banking). The field of economics is evolving rapidly: currently, the job requirements for economists require students to have practical experience with rigorous quantitative research skills. Employers require students to be well attuned to new economic models and various programming languages (for example, R-STUDIO, Python, MATLAB, and STATA). As a result, my teaching philosophy emphasizes a great deal of financial modeling and statistical programming with applications.

As a professor, I firmly believe that attention should be given to class performance, but more importantly my teaching philosophy stresses the importance of building up the student's professional portfolio. From looking at data and conducting research on career development, I realized that having an A in a course explains only a small percent of variation in the capacity of the student to succeed professionally. Often, faculty members downplay the importance of securing internships for students and properly preparing students for the professional sector and graduate school. For professors, it is important to understand students' academic aspirations and professional desires so as to better guide them to meet these objectives: my teaching philosophy incorporate this aspect. Last semester, I helped two of my students and encouraged them to secure an internship in the financial sector. Additionally, I helped one my students get a conference paper by co-authoring a paper with her.

For students interested in financial internships, I encourage them to sign up for internship credits in the early stages of the career (see my resume, where I supervised internships last semester). I use the experience that I have acquired working in the financial sector to develop learning objectives for my students' internships. In my classes (for example, econometrics and finance), I teach practical concepts, newly developed models, and emphasize new research methods to students. This approach builds a strong foundation for students to handle graduate school and the professional needs of the financial sector. Ultimately, my goal as a professor is to motivate students to be interested in economics (its very critical), to enhance their understanding of economic theory at the highest level, and to help them develop a better understanding of how financial theory can be applied into sound economic research designed to answer the complex economic challenges that the world faces today.

Close to perfect responses from my teaching evaluations are a testament of my devotion and professionalism in the art of teaching economics to both undergraduate students and graduate students. It is important for students to be comfortable in class and feel enthusiastic about the learning material. Therefore, I try to create a classroom environment in which students feel respected, supported, coached, and comfortable to ask questions. To better accomplish these objectives, I make myself highly available to my students during the semester and I consistently encourage students to be open in sharing new ideas, and concerns about class material; so that I can better enhance their performances.¹

My current class content includes detailed lectures designed to promote a professional understanding of concepts, including rigorous problem sets designed specifically to challenge students academically. However, these problem sets are always accompanied by detailed answer keys, which allow students to learn effectively. Additionally, my class contents always include a rigorous research component aimed at bolstering student research skills, but also designed to familiarize students with recently published economic articles and statistical software (for example, R-STUDIO, STATA, EViews, Python, SPSS, and MATLAB). Weekly readings related to class lectures are mandatory and these readings are assigned from popular economics journals to broaden students' perspectives on class material and research ideas. A research paper reflecting class contents is mandatory and designed for practical purposes.

In the Fall of 2022, my students learned how to use machine learning and text mining to analyze consumer behavior in managerial economics. The assignment applied all the different theoretical concepts that we learned in class. For instance, students had to compute a practical measure of cardinal utility for different gyms in Mankato by relying on google ratings and then use regression analysis to evaluate the factors that influence consumer utility for the gym industry in Mankato. Additionally, students analyzed the *market structure* of the entire gym market in Mankato by relying on the theoretical assumptions of different market structures learned

¹For evidence, see my teaching evaluations comments for each year (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022).

in class. Consequently, it is important to stress that my teaching philosophy emphasize research and applied econometrics.

My teaching philosophy strongly emphasizes liberal art values, because I challenge students to be open minded and innovative, this in turn allows students to develop strong critical thinking skills: they begin to ask important questions regarding lecture contents and produce innovative research ideas. In conclusion, my teaching philosophy emphasizes both a **guided** and **collaborative** style of teaching. More specifically, I make it a priority to enhance the learning experience by guiding and engaging students in class discussions and group activities. As a student, I saw how easy it was for me to feel left out, discouraged, and misguided. As a professor, I believe that it is my responsibility to ensure that students perform at the highest level, but also at an acceptable academic level and nothing short; as a result, I have made it priority to devote all efforts to ensure that all my students succeed. I have an implicit policy of not leaving any student behind in my classes, meaning that I go for the extra mile (for example, more office hours, after class talks, and extra coaching) to help those students who require more attention.