

Statement of Teaching Philosophy – Conor Lennon

In my view, Economics is the study of human interaction. This viewpoint translates into a pedagogical style that is focused on helping students develop a set of tools that allows them to understand the society they inhabit rather than rote learning of definitions, formulas, or facts about the economy. As an example of this approach, on the first day of my Introductory Microeconomics classes, I begin with an in-class auction (for soda or candy). I lead students to believe that this is an adversarial transaction in the sense that I'm interested in figuring out how much each student will pay and how I can make a healthy profit. The problem is that the student who wins the auction is always smiling. I note that smile to the class and then ask my students to describe the nature of the interaction that took place - who was harmed? Is anyone unhappy? Was the auction fair? What alternatives to auctions exist and are they attractive to us as a society? This exercise sets the tone of my class - one where the nature of human interaction and exchange is the object of study. My strong teaching evaluations (4.4 average, out of 5) highlight the impact of my approach. Students comment that they find my teaching style effective and the material worthwhile, and students in my research-focused seminar classes nominated me as a 2018 Faculty Favorite.

To be successful in the classroom, I distill each course into a set of three to five core learning objectives. I then determine the abilities that students must develop to meet those objectives. As the semester progresses, I remind students of the required skills and how the material in each meeting contributes towards them. Last, I make it clear to students how they will demonstrate that they have mastered the necessary skills. Following these principles streamlines the process of defining and meeting objectives, anchors my instruction to those objectives, and simplifies the development of assignments and exams.

Because the focus is on developing skills, my classroom is always active. In practice, this means frequent exercises for students to complete, in-class experiments, and weekly low-stakes assessments. In-class experiments have proven to be a powerful learning tool in my classroom: the data we generate engages students in a way data from a textbook example simply cannot. A 2017 Faculty Learning Community, focused on active and adaptive learning, helped me to implement engaging classroom techniques that support students as they develop the skills they need to meet my course objectives. For example, to assess whether students can apply the tools they are learning, I require regular active engagement with popular media (podcasts, clips from television shows, and so on) that both resonates with students and reinforces economic concepts. If students cannot relate the media content to the class material, I know they do not really understand it. An added benefit is that varied and frequent exercises help me identify struggling students early in the semester. I engage those students by meeting with them to learn where they are struggling and how I can help. I want each of my students to experience the benefit economics can provide to their careers and personal lives.

Summary of Overall Teaching Effectiveness

Semester	Course Number and Name	Overall Effectiveness (Max = 5)
Fall 2016	ECON 490 - Global Economic Issues	4.3
	HON 441 - Honors Seminar in Economics	4.6
Spring 2017	ECON 201- Principles of Micro*	4.2
	ECON 201- Principles of Micro	4.6
Fall 2017	ECON 490 - Global Economic Issues	4.8
	HON 441 - Honors Seminar in Economics	4.2
	ECON 475 - Senior Seminar (Capstone Research Class)	4.2
Spring 2018	ECON 201- Principles of Micro*	4.3
Fall 2018	PPE 300 - Intro to Philosophy, Politics, and Economics**	n/a
Spring 2019	ECON 201- Principles of Micro*	4.2
	ECON 201- Principles of Micro	4.5

* 8am Class Meeting Time

** A&S Course co-taught with Philosophy faculty (evaluation format differs significantly)

Note: The table reports the mean response to the following question: “Considering both the limitations and possibilities of the subject matter and course, how would you rate the **overall** teaching effectiveness of your instructor?” The University of Louisville does not provide University-wide averages for comparison purposes.

2017 - 2018 Faculty Favorite Nomination Comments¹

Student 1 - Dr. Lennon is one of the most engaging, high-level, and compelling teachers I've ever met. His Global Economic Issues class takes a fresh approach to the world's biggest problems, and I have learned so much. He marries theory and applicability beautifully. UofL is incredibly blessed to have him.

Student 2 - Dr. Lennon is the most helpful, appreciative, practical and kind professor I have had at the university. He makes himself accessible to his students as much as possible and never turns you away if you need help. He encourages his students to extend their university participation beyond the classroom through beneficial reading groups and coordinates informative speakers for his students and all of the College of Business. Dr. Lennon has worked tirelessly, from my personal experience in senior capstone, this semester to give his students an enjoyable semester regardless of the hard work and effort needed for his class. He has constantly encouraged us to exceed our personal expectations by giving information on opportunities we can seek through hard work. Although there is not really a “bad” professor, Dr. Lennon stands out among the faculty I've experienced in the best ways and deserves to have his efforts and teaching style recognized!

Student 3 - Dr. Lennon is an exceptional professor in the ways that he is able to connect challenging economic principles to individual interests and present-day issues. I have him to thank for my renewed interests in my economics degree this last year. I will continue to encourage fellow students to take more economics courses and always recommend Dr. Lennon for a mentor and professor.

¹ These comments come from the 2017-2018 UofL Faculty Favorite Nominations Website:
<http://louisville.edu/delphi/awards/facultyfavorites>.