

TEACHING STATEMENT - GUY ARIE

Teaching is a unique opportunity to affect the minds and lives of important members of our society. As a TA, I have taught review sessions for graduate students and had non-academic teaching experiences detailed below. I find teaching inspiring and fun. Translating complex and sometimes abstract notions to a simple, successful learning process is a stimulating challenge that often turns into an interesting learning experience by itself. In an MBA setting, I would be interested in teaching any strategy or economics oriented class, or any class in statistic inference. In an economics department, I would be interested in teaching classes that involve microeconomic theory at any level, as well as advanced classes in dynamic and stochastic programming.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

I have had several opportunities to teach. As a graduate student I have taught a review session in Economics for Kellogg MBAs for three years. I also had for the last two years the unique experience of assisting professor Tom Hubbard in his innovative Advanced Business Strategy class. The main activity in this class is a quarter long consulting project that the students undertake in small groups. I have interacted with each student group several times in the quarter, reviewing their progress and discussing the next steps. I have also learned much from watching professor Hubbard teach complex and abstract strategy concepts. Before attending Kellogg, I graded an econometrics class and taught the Optimization review session at Tel Aviv University's graduate program.

One of my most exciting teaching experience was when I volunteered in low income communities in Israel. Part of my duties included teaching a free bi-weekly "analysis of current policy" class as part of a larger weekly adult empowerment activity. The typical participant of these activities was a "stay at home mom" with very basic education. Nevertheless the participants learned to evaluate and discuss the economic arguments made in the public debates they felt affected them. The main debates at the time were school choice and land zoning. For me, the main achievement was that they kept coming to class. In addition, I'd like to think that the class had something to do with the fact that several participants eventually participated in the relevant public debates, testified before the relevant committees and affected the resulting decision.

Finally, as part of my military service, I was responsible for the year-long training of soldiers in my unit. I was also part of a two man task force that redesigned the unit's training program. While the military training environment is unique, the experience helped me appreciate the importance of design in the teaching process. Also, guiding students on a year long training exposed me to the variety in legitimate learning styles.

TEACHING APPROACH

My teaching approach was shaped by those I consider my best teachers. One of my guiding principles is to respect all students. I mention this first because it is almost trivial, yet often forgotten. A good learning experience is shaped by the *learner's* abilities, interests and goals. Teaching requires not only understanding the material, but just as importantly understanding the students. As a teacher, I must constantly check whether a student falls behind or finds the class does not address his/her needs. Generally, the student's situation is not unique. Each such student represents a type of learner that the class is under-serving. It is my responsibility to adjust the material and pace to the needs of the class.

Implementing new knowledge is difficult and often initially exposes misunderstandings. Making errors is a critical part any learning process. Furthermore, many failures identify mistakes made by the instructor rather than the learner. It is the instructor's role to devise exercises that challenge students into applying their new knowledge and provide honest feedback about progress. Depriving this from students deprives them from the possibility to learn and improve. Even after the course, students make critical use of this feedback. For this reason, I believe that part of respecting students is making clear demands and standing by them. This is not easy as modern instructors have dual tasks of teaching and pleasing their student-customers. While I have only been an observer of this challenge so far, I believe good teaching includes setting a bar that requires meaningful learning. If the instructor set the bar so low that students could get by without making any effort, most students get nothing from the class.

As for designing the classroom experience, I am strongly influenced by the following quote from my freshman infinitesimal math teacher: "A good class is very much like a good play — there is an exposition, some suspense, a hopefully exciting revelation and one moral." As I prepare a class, I always review it through this lens. Is the exposition clear? Is the suspense sufficient to hold interest? Is the moral clear?

I especially try to follow the "one moral" rule. The cognitive task of transforming a lesson into knowledge is very difficult. Transforming a lesson into two separate knowledge bits is almost impossible. Communicating this one lesson clearly is very important. If students know what they should be getting from the class, they can evaluate their understanding better and feel more comfortable asking for help. Choosing the one moral is never easy. There is always more to say. However, this difficulty reflects an often under-appreciated role of teachers. We choose not only what is being taught, but also what is not. It is our task to identify the most important lessons to convey in a topic. Leaving that task to the students is almost always wrong.

As the previous quote suggests, I believe the right "exposition" is an important part of any class. Fashioned after my freshman philosophy-of-law teacher, my review sessions always start with a short bird's eye review

of where we are in terms of the overall class objectives. I then zone in to the current section and to what we already accomplished, what we will try to accomplish today, and what will be the key or non-trivial steps.

Finally, I try to use questions rather than statements as the starting points for discussion as much as possible. A sequence of good questions not only puts everyone on the same page, but also engages the class about the importance and complexities of the topic at hand. When I prepare as a teacher, I find that developing the right Q&A sequence is a challenging exercise that helps me focus and clarify the class objectives.

To conclude, teaching important and difficult topics is a privilege and a challenge. I appreciate the complexities in designing a classroom experience that engages and encourages learning by all participants while creating new and useful knowledge. I look forward to interaction with undergraduate and graduate students for many years.