

Teaching Philosophy and Experience

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My goal in teaching is to engage students to become active thinkers who can critically evaluate theoretical arguments and use them to interpret real-life situations. By creating an interactive classroom experience, I seek to encourage students to question the implicit assumptions in theoretical claims or in empirical methods, and develop a coherent framework for evaluating others' work. As one who has taught both in engineering and sociology at the undergraduate and graduate levels, I challenge my students to go beyond textbook and lecture material, and bridge theoretical knowledge with empirical applications.

I have been fortunate to serve as a teaching assistant in two very distinct fields at Princeton University. Due to the different characters of the subject matters in engineering and sociology, I adopted different teaching styles, yet my emphasis on student-instructor interaction, and connecting theory to application remained the same, whether I was teaching optimization or economic sociology. For example, during my master's education in engineering at Princeton, in the fall of 2001, I was a teaching assistant for a graduate-level course on time-series analysis. I taught 30 students weekly, divided evenly into two smaller sections (called "precepts" at Princeton). The precepts involved solving example problems to clarify the lectures, and to help students with their weekly assignments. To facilitate student learning, I made a habit of breaking each problem into components, and solving each component interactively with students. This approach, which is considered extraordinary in the Engineering School, was appreciated by my students who nominated me for the school's Outstanding Teaching Award.

As a Ph.D. student in sociology, I served as a teaching assistant for a social psychology course in the spring of 2003. The precepts involved discussing the readings and lecture material, and required me to devise a different teaching strategy. To elicit participation and facilitate intellectual exchange among students, I started each precept with a vignette, often recounting a real-life incident the students were likely to be familiar with. I then asked them to interpret this vignette in light of the week's readings. This method not only eased students into discussing their ideas, but also gave them an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge to understand real-life situations. Students' high regard of my teaching style, as evidenced by the attached evaluation scores, led the instructor to ask me to teach this course again in the spring of 2004.

I applied a similar strategy of combining theory with real-life examples during my guest lecture for Viviana Zelizer's economic sociology course in the fall of 2005. The lecture was on the effect of globalization on local economic life, and aimed to counter students' preconceptions that globalization necessarily creates a homogenous world culture. To demonstrate the extent of globalization, I drew up on several real-life examples, such as transnational corporations, and asked students to identify more cases. "McDonald's" turned out to be a popular answer, as I suspected, and a discussion started on how McDonald's is the same everywhere. This exchange gave me an opportunity to invite some international students to visit the McDonald's webpage in their country of residence

and translate the menus. We collectively found out that the menus were quite different in each country, and typically included items from the local cuisines. This exercise helped me make my point in a very effective manner by using a real-life example, and by making the students an active part of the learning process.

Teaching Interests

In the future, I plan to design courses that center around student participation, engagement, and learning through real-life applications. I am interested in teaching both at the undergraduate and graduate levels in several core areas of sociology including migration, economic sociology, development, statistical methodology, social networks, computational modeling, inequality and stratification. I am also prepared to teach family, gender, globalization and culture at the undergraduate level.

Teaching Evaluations

<i>SOC 241 - Social Basis of Individual Behavior</i>	University Average	Garip's Section (Spring '03)	Garip's Section (Spring '04)
Ability to raise challenging questions	4.1	4.2	4.6
Ability to help clarify course materials	4.2	4.7	5.0
Ability to encourage participation	4.0	4.3	4.2
Instructor's responsiveness	4.3	4.5	4.8
Overall quality of precepts, classes	4.1	4.5	4.6