

### **My Teaching Philosophy/ Ran Abramitzky**

My goal as a teacher is to instill in my students the appreciation for economic thinking, and to convey its usefulness in solving problems that are central to our lives. More specifically, I try to prepare students to become effective and critical economists, regardless of whether they decide to work in the private sector, public sector, or they wish to continue their studies and conduct economic research.

How do I accomplish my goal? I simply try to be a good teacher, which, for me, means the following.

A good teacher is passionate about his subject and about teaching it. Joel Mokyr, a prominent economic historian and the best teacher I have had, once told me: “sometimes I wonder why the University pays me for doing this. I should be paying them...”. I truly believe that enthusiasm, when honest and coming from the heart, is contagious. After all, if the teacher is not excited, why would his students be?

A good teacher is well-prepared. This does not mean he can answer every question, as we are all human beings, but it does mean his expertise is never in question. Knowing the material well, however, is not enough. We all had world-class Professors who were very knowledgeable, but could not pass on their knowledge to students. A good teacher thinks carefully before class on how to articulate his ideas in a clear way.

A good teacher simplifies complex concepts, yet keeps the discussion stimulating. He does not try to impress students with the use of jargon, but makes clear and concise arguments. On the other hand, he makes sure the discussions are challenging. As Einstein put it: “things should be stated as simple as possible, but not simpler”.

A good teacher cares dearly about his students’ learning. This means he constantly seeks their feedbacks and is sensitive to their problems and concerns. It also means he makes himself accessible to them.

Teaching economics is challenging. The economics profession is part of the social sciences and its main goal is to understand human behavior. Yet, it is often formal and employs mathematics as a main tool. Many economic phenomena can be explained intuitively with little use of math, or mathematically with little use of intuition. Yet, intuition and mathematics alone can only take an economist so far. A good teacher combines the two. He makes students comfortable in using mathematical analysis, while providing intuitive explanations. He explains the intuition behind the math, and the math behind the intuition.

Students take economic classes for various purposes. A good teacher shows that everyone has something to learn from economics and that everyone can find interest in some aspects of it. He does so by relating classroom ideas to the “real world”, by providing intriguing applications, and by involving students in the discussion.

Most importantly, the greatest complement for a good teacher is that he has made a difference.