

## Piruz Saboury Statement of Teaching Philosophy

The integration of research, teaching, and learning inspires my teaching philosophy and practice. I learn through research and teach to guide my students through their learning process. My mission is to motivate my students to use the same intellectual curiosity and critical thinking that drive me in research in their learning and analyses. My goal is to provoke a passion in my students for thinking and learning based on the understanding that knowledge is the key to making sound judgments. I work so that my students walk out of the classroom, thinking about what they have learned and eager to know more.

I have a diverse range of pedagogical experience and a successful teaching record. I have received the 2019 *Murray and Celeste Fasken Distinguished Teaching Award* from the College of Liberal Arts at Texas A&M University. I have designed and taught (as the instructor of record) Principles of Microeconomics for two semesters in large classes (138 and 234 diverse students from various majors) as well as the second half of an advanced undergraduate course in the Economics of Microfinance, which directly relates to my research agenda. I have also served as a teaching assistant for several courses, including undergraduate Economic Development, Master's level Money, Banking, and Financial Markets, and Ph.D. level Game Theory. As a teaching assistant, I have performed various tasks, including assisting in course material development, delivering lectures, teaching recitation and review sessions, and grading. The wide range of students I have interacted with in various roles have rated my teaching highly in course evaluations and provided positive comments.<sup>1</sup>

I apply the principles of integrated course design as an effective tool in my teaching practice. I align my courses' elements, such as learning activities, assignments, projects, and exams, with the overarching course and program objectives. I have received rigorous training in integrated course design from Higher Education experts at the Center for Teaching Excellence at Texas A&M University.

I design my courses and lesson plans by determining the learning outcomes based on my philosophy of training critical thinkers as well as the course topic, expectations, level, class size, and available resources. For example, in recitation sessions for Game Theory, a first-year Ph.D. level course, the goal was to reinforce previously learned material. Therefore, I chose the main outcome as "Be able to interpret the intuition behind economic models and solve advanced mathematical problems based on those models" (third level of Bloom's taxonomy).<sup>2</sup> In another case, I was the instructor for Principles of Microeconomics, a freshman-level introductory course. The main goal was for the students to understand fundamental economic concepts and analyze everyday economic issues objectively. Thus, I designed the course with ten learning outcomes from Bloom's taxonomy's first three levels. Moreover, I provided real-life examples for each outcome on the syllabus. For instance, one of the learning outcomes was: "Describe market demand, supply, and equilibrium and calculate market price and quantity." This question was followed by a clarifying example from everyday topics: "Why is the housing price in College Station rising?"<sup>3</sup>

I use multiple assessment methods to measure the learning outcomes during the course. For example, I designed my Principles of Microeconomics course to include ten electronic quizzes (using Poll Everywhere online polling system), seven homework assignments (using Blackboard online learning management system), and four exams on paper. Such design offered students various opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and analytical capabilities aligned with the learning outcomes I had defined.

I utilize diverse teaching techniques and strategies to ensure that all students with various learning styles and potential disabilities understand and achieve my courses' learning outcomes. In order to accommodate various learning styles, I use multiple examples, repeat concepts with different wordings, and use various types of supplementary material, including academic articles, news articles, textbook chapters, slides, and problem sets. For example, in Economics of Microfinance, a rather small senior-level class, I asked direct questions from my students and invoked discussions amongst them by asking students to answer their classmates' questions. I also assigned readings from various sources, including academic papers and articles from the news and analytical sources. As another example, in Principles of Microeconomics, a sizable freshman-level class, I used

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<sup>1</sup> A summary of my teaching evaluations is available at <https://piruzsaboury.weebly.com/teaching.html>

<sup>2</sup> **Armstrong, Patricia** "Bloom's Taxonomy" <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>

<sup>3</sup> In 2017 and 2018, the prices were rising due to the increased student population.

ungraded electronic polls to get immediate feedback and provide an environment for all students to engage with the classroom discussions. Moreover, I am always ready to appropriately accommodate students with special needs to prevent disabilities from impeding their learning. For example, in Principles of Microeconomics, I had a student with exceptional talent despite suffering from two types of disabilities. I worked with the Department of Disability Resources to facilitate proper accommodations for that student. He performed very well in the course and received a well-deserved grade of A.

I am prepared to integrate research, quantitative analysis, and writing components into my classes. I have a diverse research portfolio and hold a graduate certificate in applied statistics. I also have the experience of teaching an advanced course with a research and writing component. For my Economics of Microfinance course, students (in groups of three) were required to write and present a research paper as an exercise in utilizing their knowledge in a practical project. I worked with my students in multiple stages of the project until they successfully delivered the final papers. I guided my students in developing research topics, pointed them to useful resources, and provided feedback on their work. During the presentations that were planned a week before the final papers, I provided final feedback. I also provided an incentive for all students to comment on each other's work using the Poll Everywhere online polling system. I organized all of the feedback in a written document for each group. Most of the final papers reflected significant learning and progress during the course.

I embrace the effective integration of technology in teaching and learning. For example, for the Principles of Microeconomics, since I had a face-to-face class with more than 130 students in one semester and more than 230 in another, I integrated electronic and internet technology to have a hybrid delivery style for my course. I used Blackboard as an online platform to make class material available progressively and in tandem with face-to-face lectures. I also used this online learning management system to design, assign, and grade homework. In choosing online teaching solutions, I am cognizant of availability and affordability. For example, I have used the Poll Everywhere online polling system for in-class quizzes due to its affordability and user-friendly interface. Because of my experience in using technology in teaching, I was invited to teach new graduate assistants in the Department of Economics to use learning management systems.

I collect and study students' feedback to reflect on my teaching and make improvements. For example, after receiving student feedback on class planning in Principles of Microeconomics, I have decided to incorporate short breaks and switch between lecture and group/pair activities in the future to enhance student engagement.

Having taught a diverse body of students at Texas A&M University, I am committed to creating an inclusive learning environment by facilitating and promoting the importance of diversity of race, ethnicity, background, culture, value, religion, and learning style in my classroom. I warmly welcome different opinions on class topics and offer alternative takes on any issue in a discussion from opposing views. My goal is to help my students understand and respect each other's perspectives and viewpoints. For example, when I teach my students about air pollution as a negative external effect of fossil fuel consumption, I introduce two types of remedies: taxation (prescribed by the political left) and facilitating private bargaining (prescribed by the political right). I discuss both approaches with my students and encourage them to grasp the merits and downsides of each. In the process, they learn not to dismiss someone's idea just because they disagree with them and instead understand and respect their points of view.

On a final note, I am as passionate about learning as I am about teaching. As an educator, I strive to develop professionally, not only by researching and learning Economics but also by continuously developing my knowledge and understanding of effective teaching strategies through attending professional development programs such as seminars and workshops.