

## Han-Yen Kao

### *Teaching Statement*

---

My goal when teaching is to make a lifelong impact on students' life. I do this in two ways. First, in my class I make learning economics fun. Second, I make sure students understand "why" before they learn "what." Most of the time, I find these two complement each other.

First, in designing my class I employ strategies to make sure my students enjoy learning economics. Many years later students in my Intermediate Microeconomic Analysis may forget the idea that marginal utility of good 1 decreases in the amount of good 1, but they will remember a classmate who ate a half dozen donuts in class and reported how happy he was with each one. Golden Balls, a British game show in which two gamers must trust each other to keep money, is perfect for understanding prisoner's dilemma. Those who have watched Friends will recall how the common knowledge assumption in game theory comes alive in the episode "The One Where Everybody Finds Out." In the short run, these funny materials make the course enjoyable and relevant. In the long run, the more students like economics, the more likely they will be to learn more and apply economics later in life.

Second, I want my students to appreciate why they are learning each concept. As a must, I emphasize the economic intuition before I derive equations. In addition, I conduct classroom experiments to let students experience the "why" parts. Just as students do experiments in physics and biology classrooms, they learn economic theories better by experiencing them. Earlier in my career, I had students play the beauty-contest game<sup>1</sup> and prisoner's dilemma in class. This year, I became one of the first economics teachers at Rutgers to use MobLab, an educational app that allows every student in class to play in the same game via a smartphone.<sup>2</sup> This teaching strategy seamlessly connects to my research interest in experimental and behavioral economics. I am excited about its effect, and I expect to expand the use of this approach in the new Experimental and Behavioral Economics course I am developing.

In my course ratings, students always write how they love learning this challenging subject. They often attribute their understanding of economics to the way I make the material relevant, fun, and exciting. In each of the full semester Intermediate Microeconomics courses I have taught, the ratings of every aspect of my teaching have been well above the averages of the same course, of the same level, and of all courses in the Department of Economics at Rutgers. The high response rates suggest the results are reliable.<sup>3</sup> A former student I taught served as a student tutor in Intermediate Microeconomics at the Rutgers Learning Center after she took my class. Many students indicate they want to continue the major because of the enthusiasm I was able to generate through my teaching philosophy and methods.

"Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school." In my teaching career, this will be the learning goal I set for my students. My pedagogical approaches are dedicated to sowing the learnable seeds of economics that will produce the crop of citizens who will carry the wisdom of economics in their later life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Nagel, R. (1995). "Unraveling in Guessing Games: An Experimental Study." *The American Economic Review*, 85(5), 1313-1326.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.moblab.com/>.

<sup>3</sup> Cashin, W.E. (1995). "Student Ratings of Teaching: The Research Revisited." IDEA Paper No. 32, Center for Faculty Evaluation & Development, Kansas State University, September.