

# Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Elena Pellegrini

As an undergraduate at a liberal arts college, I experienced firsthand the profound impact a professor can have on a student's life. As a first-generation college student, I often struggled to navigate the complexities of higher education—from choosing coursework, to envisioning a future career. At the time, I had no idea what a PhD was, let alone how I could pursue one. The only reason I am where I am today is because a few professors took the time to listen, encouraged me to challenge myself, and inspired me to undertake this journey. My objective as a teacher, then, is to embody those same values that were passed on to me from my professors at my undergraduate institution: to engage, connect, and transform.

**Engage.** This is the value I uphold most strongly. To me, “engage” means sparking students’ passion for what they are learning. I want them to care about the material not because it is required or graded, but because it feels relevant. To achieve this, I begin lectures with real-world examples tied to the day’s topic. For instance, when the Federal Reserve changes interest rates, I lead a discussion on the economic forces behind the decision and show students how they can make sense of it with the very tools they have just learned. This approach not only captures attention but also highlights the power of economics in understanding current events.

**Connect.** Teaching is as much about connection as it is about knowledge. In class, I strive to build trust and collaboration by working through exercises alongside my students, encouraging them to attempt solutions, offer hints, and provide further explanations when needed. This fosters both problem-solving skills and critical thinking. Beyond class, I make myself approachable and available. From the first day, students know they can reach out to me for anything, whether about coursework, homesickness, or uncertainty about their career. I listen, advise, and provide support. To me, connection means building a learning community where students feel supported, challenged, and never alone in their journey.

**Transform.** Transformation is what happened to me during college, and what I hope to inspire in my students. My professors helped me discover my passion, build confidence, and develop expertise. I want to offer the same: not just knowledge, but motivation and inspiration. It is not only about learning a new concept, but about understanding *why* we learn it and *why* it matters. To foster this, I often challenge students to reflect on broader economic questions, *Why do you want to study economics? Why are we using this formula or making this assumption?*, as well as more personal ones: *What kind of future do you want to help create? What problems in the world do you want to solve?* By encouraging them to connect learning with purpose, I hope to empower them to see themselves as future leaders.

Years from now, some of my students may not remember the formulas for opportunity cost or the precise definition of GDP deflators. But I am confident they will carry with them the skills, confidence, and values that last beyond the classroom. If I succeed in helping students think critically, ask meaningful questions, and believe in their own potential, then I have succeeded as a teacher.

Table 1. Summary of Course Evaluations (scale 1-5)

Section:	ECON101			Stats			Avg.	
	25	27	30	07	08	11	self	dept.
<i>The instructor...</i>								
1. was effective in helping students understand difficult concepts & methods	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.7	4.3	4.3	4.42	4.21
2. was available for help outside of class	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.53	4.27
3. stimulated interest in the subject matter	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.1	4.1	4.26	4.18
4. motivated me to do my best work	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.6	4.2	4.3	4.32	4.10
Rate the instructor overall as a teacher	4.22	4.04	3.88	4.53	4.00	3.96	4.11	3.83
Response Rate	87%	90%	96%	81%	75%	79%	85%	

*Note:* For ECON101, I was also awarded the Donald J. White Teaching Excellence Award

*Selected open-ended responses to the question: "Did the instructor treat all students with respect, and cultivate an open and welcoming environment in class? How or how not?"*

"Elena was amazing. Her discussion sessions are what has carried me through this course this semester. She breaks down content very well and goes over any questions that we have without hesitation. She was a blessing to have."

"Yes, she was very welcoming and always just wanted to help us understand difficult concepts better. The goal of the class was to answer and explain these hard concepts and she did this very well and was always very accommodating for office hours and extra help outside of class."

"Yes! She was super sweet. I liked having a female prof in such a male dominated field, and she made me feel super knowledgeable and motivated."

"Yes, she was awesome, from what I have observed she is easily the best option for a TA."

"Yes, Elena was very kind and always willing to help students and encouraged questions to be asked."

"Yes, Elena was a good teacher, and the classroom environment always felt welcoming and fostered good learning."

"She was super nice and helpful. She would give great feedback and always respond to emails in timely fashion to provide aid to the entire class."

"Yes! Elena is the best and is always there for extra help when you need her. She is very helpful in the discussion sections."