Teaching Statement
Remy Levin

Teaching Philosophy

Economics, as a discipline, has two significant comparative advantages over other social sciences. One is the theoretical framework of utility maximization. The other is its deep commitment to careful empirical analysis of real world issues that takes problems like unobserved selection seriously. When I teach students economics my primary goal is to teach them to think like an economist, by appreciating both these aspects of our discipline. This means ensuring that they leave my class better trained in the economic method than when they entered. To me this entails, in general, favoring conceptual depth over breadth. Students are unlikely to remember the specific facts that we covered years later. But the economic method of thinking about problems is portable and applicable to everyday life. If I am able to imbue them with a sufficient appreciation for it, it is likely to stick with them as a powerful tool, whether they go on to become social scientists or citizens at large.

What this means in practice is a heavy emphasis on real-world data as a motivator for discussion, together with carefully tying these facts to a relevant economic model of the situation. In an introductory economics class, for instance, this might mean starting a class period by running a double-auction experiment, and ending with a discussion of the law of one price, why it generally holds, and why we sometimes see it fail in markets like healthcare. In an upper division elective about the economics of climate change this would entail starting out with a survey of important facts from the latest IPCC report, and ending with a careful discussion of the Prisoner’s dilemma that touches on dominant strategies, communication, and Pigouvian taxes. In a graduate seminar on risk-taking this would mean starting by unpacking the reasons why expected utility theory and prospect theory diverge in their predictions on losses, and ending by discussing conclusions from the meta analyses on the risk-taking literature that the students were previously assigned to carry out.

Teaching Interests

I would be happy to teach any class at the undergraduate level or in the MBA core. If teaching advanced electives I would be particularly interested in teaching courses in behavioral economics, development economics, decisions under uncertainty, and judgement and decision-making. In the graduate core I would feel most comfortable teaching in the microeconomics sequence, and could also teach in the econometrics sequence if needed. If given an opportunity to teach graduate-level electives I would be most excited to teach classes on behavioral economics, development economics, and the long-run determinants of economic preferences.