

## Teaching Philosophy - James Taylor

When teaching, either lecturing or tutoring, I aim for a few goals. I want student's to understand the material well enough to use it in other fields, to be able to solve novel problems, and to be able to remember it, to some extent, in 5 years. All work done during semester is in service of these goals. I care less about how well a student can regurgitate my answers to some problem, or their proficiency at cramming prior to an exam.

When developing courses, I target three key areas. The first is meta-study of the course; a discussion of why we might be interested in the material in the first place. This is primarily a discussion of the philosophy of the subject. Then we move on to talking about what the material actually is, and finally on how to implement and work with the course material. I think the first step is extremely important is giving context for the students, and is often overlooked in many courses. I also find this first step useful for allowing students to utilise the material in other courses.

At the practical level of actually teaching the material, I endeavour to encourage learning by placing the learning 'in the students' own hands'. That is, by using examples, games, etc. to have the students see the course material working for themselves. This also encourages learning through mistakes as students can attempt different strategies in a risk-free, non-assessable environment. These methods are particularly useful for difficult subject matter.

Regarding assessment; I believe assessment has two key purposes. One is of course to determine a student's current level of knowledge. However another is to incentivise and reinforce learning and mastery. In my teaching I treat the second of these as more important, as it will encourage greater understanding of the material in 5 years time. I implemented this in Math for Economists with a Reflection assessment component where, after getting back their assessments, students were required to write about their experience of the assessment, focusing on what went right and wrong, and what they can do next time to improve. This second look over the material, and forcing students to acknowledge where and how they made errors, or lacked understanding, significantly improved mastery of the subject matter.