

---

## ALLISON OLDHAM LUEDTKE

---

Saint Michael's College, Department of Economics

Website: <http://allisonoldhamluedtke.com>

Phone: (540) 905-2622 Email: [aluedtke@smcvt.edu](mailto:aluedtke@smcvt.edu)

---

### STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

When students visit my office, there are three items that typically receive comments right off the bat. The first is a letterboard that I made for my first day as an assistant professor that reads, "Everything is Figureoutable." The second is usually a flyer announcing a workshop or class taking place on campus that I am encouraging my students to attend. The third is a book that I keep on my desk titled, "How College Works." I keep these things displayed prominently in my office not just for the students that stop by but also for myself. They help me remember the teaching qualities that I want to bring to the classroom. The letterboard reminds me to approach problems with patience and determination. The flyers keep me focused on the end goal of preparing students for the next step in their lives. "How College Works" taught me the importance of making interpersonal connections and reminds me to help my students make these connections however I can.

I have the "Everything is Figureoutable" sign to tell my students and me that any problem can be tackled and not to be intimidated. In my first semester as an assistant professor, I taught both Intermediate Macroeconomics and Econometrics, two classes that feature a great deal of math and a big intimidation factor. However, I ended the semester with two classes full of students who not only felt they could handle the math, but many of whom now enjoyed it. I was so successful in teaching the Macroeconomics students the calculus they needed for the course, that my colleague asked me to teach a workshop on derivatives for her Intermediate Microeconomics students. Students consistently state on my course evaluations that I make difficult material approachable, that I break down big and intimidating problems into bite size, doable pieces, and that my enthusiasm for the difficult material is contagious. One student told me that after the first day of Intermediate Macroeconomics she went home and cried because she did not think she was up to the math. She ended up enjoying the class so much that the following semester she took my Game Theory course and while working in a group on a price collusion problem, one of her group members said to her, "you're really good at this; are you a math person?" She told him, yes, she is.

I regularly post flyers and send announcements to my students about opportunities on campus to help them in school and in their careers. In my courses, I want my students to gain confidence in economics but also in college life and in finding a career. In my Principles of Macroeconomics class, I created a Pinterest board with tips on note taking, studying, scheduling, and dealing with the challenges of college. I brought in a colleague from the Career Services office to discuss careers in economics and then later to help students construct resumes and cover letters. After a conversation with a recent alumna, I added a section on computer programming to the Game Theory syllabus. I have held workshops open to all students on wage negotiation, interviewing, improving Excel skills, and economics graduate school. At the beginning of every semester, each class spends a day working with a reference librarian to practice finding data and saving references so that when they need to write a research paper, they will be prepared. I include these activities in my courses because I want my students to get a big "bang for their buck," as

one of them put it on a course evaluation. This high marginal-utility-to-price ratio improves retention at both the intensive and extensive margins: my Principles of Macroeconomics course brought in new economics majors and my upper level courses increased demand and enthusiasm for other economics courses within the major.

A professor at the University of Virginia lent me his copy of “How College Works” a couple of years ago. It describes an in-depth study of college students at liberal arts schools and their post-college outcomes. The result that stood out to me was that, often, the single event that made the biggest difference in a student’s life was meeting and talking to a faculty member, simply making a connection. I have been very successful at connecting students with mentors. Sometimes the mentor is me, but more often, it is simply someone that I know that shares their interests and has relevant experience. It can be another faculty member, a friend of mine in their field, or even just another student who has overcome similar struggles. After meeting at a conference, I brought an assistant professor from Lafayette College to speak to my Intermediate Macroeconomics class about her research. One year later, a student from that class is doing his senior thesis on a topic inspired by that professor’s work. I met a student who is interested in medical school but English is not her first language and struggles with writing. I have a friend at Columbia Medical School who overcame similar struggles and I put them in touch. When a student in my Principles of Macroeconomics course got a 38 on her first test, she told me that she was struggling to develop good study habits. I connected her with the student who had become a “math person,” because I knew she had faced the same problem and was now a very successful, driven student. They formed a study group, the Principles student got a B in the course, and the senior student discovered that she is interested in economics graduate school.

When it has been a long day of teaching and I forgot a minus sign and messed up the whole equation in one class and the students bombed a question that we prepared for hours in another, I have a couple pictures saved on my phone that always cheer me up. The first is a picture from one of the last days of my Game Theory class. The students had the choice of several different final projects, one of which was a computer programming project, and the students had broken into groups based on which option they chose. Despite the fact that almost no students in the class had any prior computer science experience, not only was the programming project the most popular option but almost every female student in the class was sitting in that group. The other picture is a screenshot of an email from a student from my Intermediate Macroeconomics course that he sent after having his first interview. It reads, “... walking out of the interview and reflecting upon what I did, I wanted to thank you for your lessons in interviewing. I do not think such success would have been possible if I hadn’t considered everything you lectured us about. And while I will not know whether or not I got the position until Sunday night, I know as a person that my interview went really well.”

## REFERENCES

Chambliss, Daniel F. *How college works*. Harvard University Press, 2014.