Case Method
Teaching
• What is the case method?
• Why use it?
• What is a case?
What Is the Case Method?
Origins of case method

- Students demanded that the dean be fired!
- Method has spread widely across universities globally and disciplines, including medicine.
Characteristics of the Method
Case instructors...

- Facilitate student thinking rather than tell them what to think.
- Ask guiding questions to help students explore a case and develop their thinking about it.
- Ask many types of questions such as open ended, clarifying, challenging, supporting, comparing.
- Talk less, students talk more.
Case students...

- Must prepare material before class and be motivated to discuss it in class.

- Collaborate with each other and the instructor to give meaning to the case.

- Learn primarily from each other.
Cases...

- Usually do not have objectively correct answers.
- But certain conclusions are far better than others: they are supported by case evidence.
Why Use the Case Method?
Problem with higher education

• Provide students with only half the education they need.

• Lectures and textbooks teach concepts, theory, and frameworks efficiently.

• But students do not learn how to use that knowledge as they will in the real world.
Is the critical knowledge in your field most valuable as theory or as a way to make a difference in the real world?
If it’s the latter, application of knowledge needs to be practiced.
Preferably in way that no one is hurt.
Are situations in which you apply knowledge highly structured or not?
Less structured = more practice required
Why is airline travel less error prone than medicine?
Knowledge is not enough.
I got my degree from Universidad de Fútbol.
I listened to many great lectures on how to play fútbol.

I watched videos and saw demonstrations by expert players.

I took the tests and received perfect scores on all of them.
However, I never practiced.
Do I know how to play fútbol?
Cases are a practice field for students.
Consider...

- We don’t allow a doctor to treat patients on her own until she has practiced applying her knowledge for years.
- Yet, in many fields, students are not asked to apply their knowledge in any situation that closely resembles the real world.
Research-Based Reasons for Using Cases
• What students do in class is much more important than what teachers do.

• **Cases require students to do something in the classroom: make meaning from a case.**
• Varying the conditions of learning makes learning harder for students but results in better learning long term.

• Cases vary the conditions of learning because every case is different, even when the domain of knowledge (e.g., finance) is the same.
Changing Nature of Work
Rise of thoughtful work

- In advanced economies, the content of work is increasingly about analytical and creative thinking and social skills.

- It is increasingly less about procedure and repetition.
Figure 1: Non-routine Tasks on the Rise in the U.S. Labor Market

Case method cultivates skills for an developing and developed economies.
What Is a Case?
Textbook

Conclusions

Linear organization

Explains meanings

Case

Information only, no conclusions

Organized disorganization

Reader constructs meaning
A case is...

- A simulation of the real world.

- Meaningless beyond the information it states about a situation.

- Given meaning by the reader and people who discuss it.
A key concept of active learning is having students construct meaning.
Cases are one learning platform for doing that.
Finally, dilemma for professors:
At the end of a discussion, do you tell the students your opinion about the case?
Your opinion =
the right answer
Students have to learn how to think for themselves.
Thank you!