



Case Use in the Economics Classroom

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Outline of Session

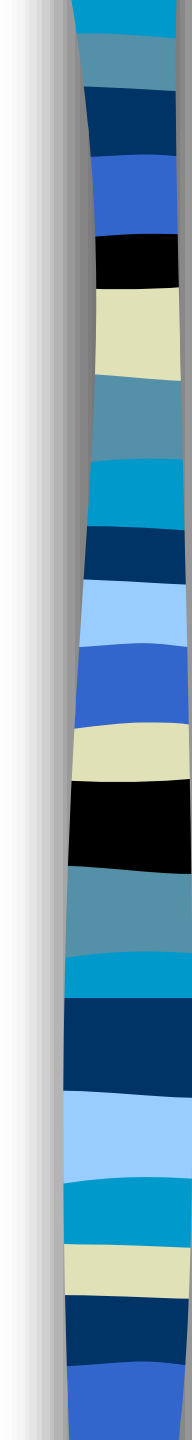
- Active learning deepens students' understanding of economics concepts.
- Using cases facilitates active learning.
- What makes a successful case?
- Cases and scarcity: cost-minimizing ways to introduce them in the syllabus.



Goals for this session ...

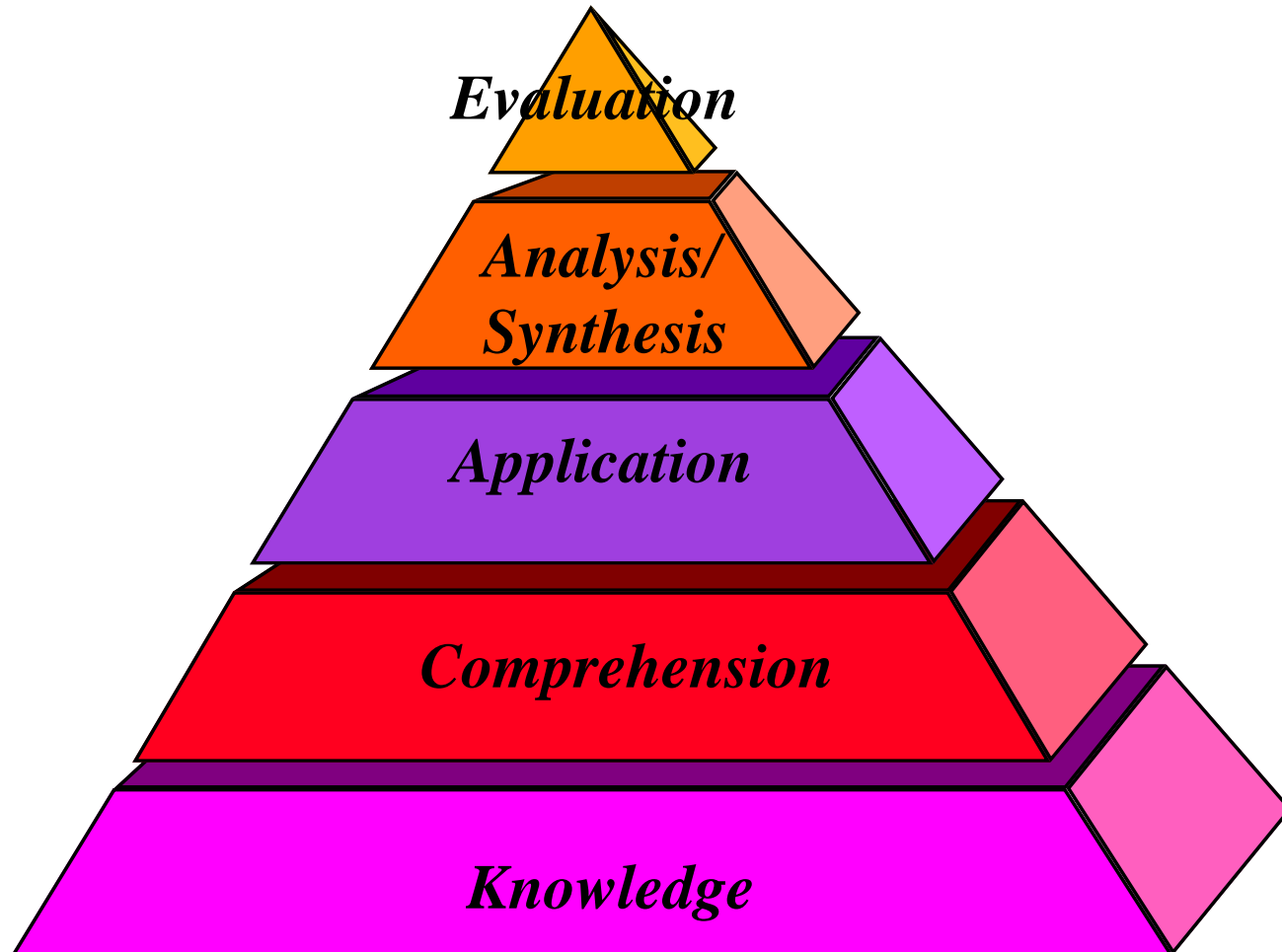
On leaving, participants will have

- ★ An appreciation of the value of case use in economics instruction.
- ★ A collection of materials useful in introducing cases.
- ★ A list of sources of cases, and tips for identifying good cases.



**A successful student in my
Econ course will be able to**

Bloom's Pyramid

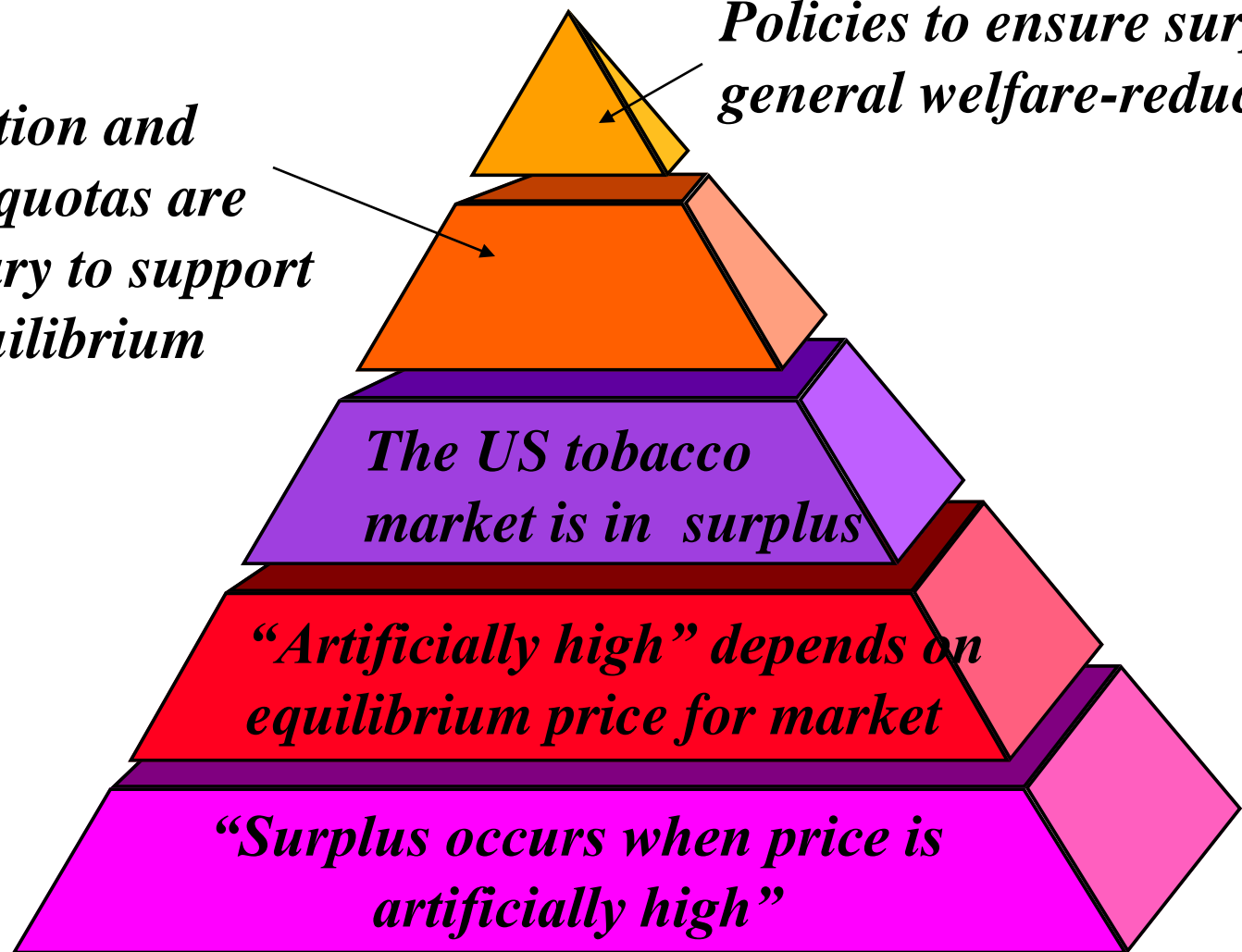


Source: as summarized in Saunders (1998)

Bloom visits the Tobacco Market

Production and import quotas are necessary to support this equilibrium

Policies to ensure surplus are general welfare-reducing





Active Learning: A Key to Climbing the Pyramid

- Testing comprehension
- Providing context for application
- Challenging the student to analyze
- Encouraging synthesis
- Provoking evaluation



Techniques for Active Learning

- Questioning of class members
- Discussion among class members
- Small-group activities
- Role-playing
- Simulation exercises



What is a Case?

A case:

- is a group of source materials on a single subject
- is drawn from real experience
- places the participants in a decision-making analytical role.



Use of Cases Facilitates Active Learning

- Economic analysis is placed “in context”.
 - The implications of analysis are more immediate.
 - The members become more emotionally involved and thus participate more fully.
- The case provides a specific example in which active-learning exercises can be nested.



What is a Star-Quality Case?

- Poses problem with no obvious answer
- Requires student to use information in the case.
- Identifies “actors” in the case who must solve problem.
- Has enough information for analysis.
- Solving the problem requires analysis.



Where can I find Star-Quality cases?

- Publishers provide them for a per-unit fee.
- You can create them by adding a “cover” to existing source materials.
- You can write your own.



Examples of Cases: Are they Star Quality?

- Alexander Hamilton vs. Ken Griffey, Jr.
- Rep. Charlie Rose and the Peanut Program
- Recycling is Garbage
- Revving up for Relief: Harley-Davidson at the ITC



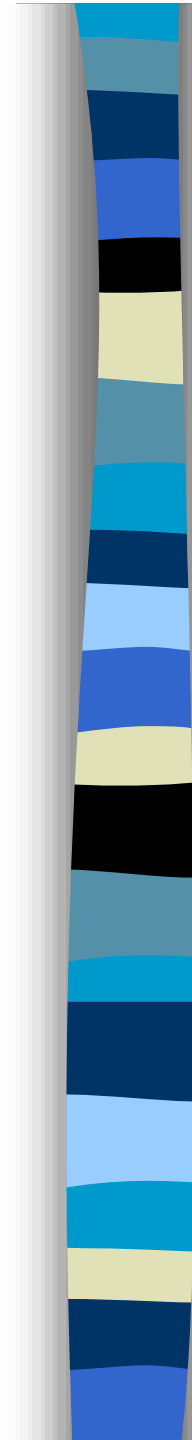
Mechanics of Case Use

- Before the class begins: fitting the case to the goals of the class session.
- During the class: integrating active-learning into “unpacking” the case.
- Combining the two: the GREAT method.



Introducing Cases in the Syllabus: A Problem of Scarcity

- Scarce classroom time. if I introduce cases, what do I exclude?
- Scarce class preparation time. My preparation time is scarce -- will using cases require more?
- Scarce time and money for students. The students already have a text -- should they also expend time and money on case materials?



Scarce Classroom Time:

If I introduce cases, what do I exclude?

-
- Correct thinking: something has to give.
 - Using cases means instruction “in depth”. For what concepts/topics is it most important that students climb the pyramid?



Scarce Class Preparation Time:

Will cases require more preparation by the instructor?

- Correct again (at least in my experience) if used for active learning.
- There is learning-by-doing, so that the preparation time declines with use.



Scarce Student Resources:

Should I require students to buy
(and read) more class materials?

- Students find these materials the most rewarding, and do not object to the added time commitment.
- Some texts now incorporate cases.



Using cases provides

- An example for application of specific techniques
- A forum for exploration and discussion of issues
- A mechanism for achieving consensus (in a non-threatening way) on issues
- A context for testing proficiency.



Cases: Valuable Tools in Challenging, Channeling and Checking up on your “Agents”

- Cases provide a compelling base for challenging students to climb Bloom’s pyramid.
- Cases serve as frameworks for organizing active-learning exercises.
- Cases make it easy for you to check comprehension and other course goals.

Remember:

Visit the Web site at

<http://www.unc.edu/home/pconway/aea2000>

for additional materials on the sources of cases,
the uses of cases, and the pedagogical merits of
cases.

If you have questions, contact me at

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