

Teaching Statement

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I am enthusiastic about teaching because it allows me to share my passion for economics, help students grow intellectually, and touch lives. During my graduate studies at the University of Pittsburgh, I taught Intermediate Microeconomics as an independent instructor and served as a teaching assistant for Introduction to Microeconomics and Introduction to Macroeconomics for multiple semesters, which involved leading four weekly recitation sessions each semester. My primary goals as an instructor are to help students develop a strong interest in the subject, master class material, and grow into better thinkers. To achieve that goal, I strive to engage my students in every step of learning, provide frequent and timely feedback, and create a comfortable and inclusive learning environment for all my students.

My commitment to teaching is evident from the results of my teaching evaluations. As an instructor for Intermediate Microeconomics, I received an overall teaching effectiveness score of 4.7/5. In addition, across the six semesters in which I served as a teaching assistant, my overall teaching effectiveness score on average was 4.6/5. My success in providing exceptional instruction is further demonstrated by my receipt of the Graduate Student Teaching Award at the University of Pittsburgh in 2019 as well as my appointment as the Teaching Mentor for other graduate students in my department during the 2019-2020 academic year.

I believe that interest is the best teacher and that students learn best when they are constantly engaged. Therefore, I strive to engage my students throughout their learning. Because certain concepts, such as those in Intermediate Microeconomics, tend to be more abstract for students, I motivate each new concept to get my students interested before delving into the details. For instance, when introducing the concept of constrained optimization, I would first talk about how cash-constrained college students could potentially use the concept to better manage their budgets and maximize their level of “happiness” in college life. Motivation like this often interests my students, who are then more eager to learn the material. Whenever possible, I would also explain abstract concepts using real-life examples and provide practice problems grounded in the real world, such as a practice problem on tax incidence based on Pittsburgh’s new beer tax or a problem on tariffs based on Trump’s trade war. While demonstrating how to solve a problem, I would also invite my students to participate in the problem-solving process by frequently asking them questions to check their understanding and to exchange our thoughts.

To foster active learning and engage my students further, I conduct problem-solving activities during each class for my students to work in pairs or small groups. To allow each student an opportunity to think through the problems first and make the most out of the small-group activities, I would have my students work independently on the problems first for a little while before encouraging them to turn to one another. During the entire period of the small-group activity, I would walk around the classroom to help answer students’ questions one-on-one or within their small groups. I find that doing so helps create a low-pressure environment in which more students are likely to ask me questions and receive individual and timely feedback; it also allows me to gather early feedback from students on the class and potentially adapt the class to

better suit their needs. In addition, small-group activities also provide a great opportunity for students to get to know and connect with their fellow classmates.

Since the pandemic took place and all the teaching activities went online, I have also been using Zoom breakout rooms to replicate the small-group active learning experience. In particular, I would assign students into breakout rooms of 4-5 people to work together and then check into each room myself to help answer their questions. Many students have told me that these active learning activities played a significant role in fostering their understanding of the class material.

Moreover, I also believe that learning should happen both in and outside the classroom. I would regularly send my students news articles or recent research findings that were closely related to the class material, such as an article on the supermarket chain Aldi's cost-cutting strategies and the debates on Big Tech companies' monopoly power. I would then discuss the issue with my students in the next class and encourage students to critically think how they could apply what they have learned in the class to analyze the issue. By doing so, I hope to help students apply economic thinking to practical issues in the real world, whatever their future paths will be, and to develop students' analytical and critical thinking.

Besides engaging students throughout their learning, I also believe in the importance of creating a comfortable and inclusive learning environment. I aim to create a communal feeling from day one through ice-breaking activities and remembering my students' names. To make students feel more comfortable to participate in class, I also engage in small talk with my students before each class about their personal interests, current affairs, or campus life, which has also allowed me to adapt the class to their interests. While providing step-by-step explanations on a white board, I would pause often and encourage my students to ask questions to prevent their questions from compounding. I would also stay back a little longer after each class and keep my office door open in general so that students who need help would have more opportunities to approach me even outside of my regular office hours.

Furthermore, at the end of each week I also conduct an anonymous poll to find out which areas students struggle the most with, so that I can review them the next class. Teaching a diverse student body, I make sure that everyone feels included by integrating different genders and cultures in my examples and assessment questions. To improve my teaching techniques further, I have also attended several voluntary pedagogical workshops, such as one on teaching a diverse student population and one on using technologies to enhance teaching effectiveness.

I grow as a teacher through constant reflections on what works best for my students, and I look forward to improving my teaching constantly. As an assistant professor, I am able and excited to teach most courses at the undergraduate level as well as several courses at the graduate level. In addition to microeconomics and macroeconomics at both the introductory and intermediate levels, the courses that I am most interested to teach (at both undergraduate and graduate levels) are economic history, political economy, health economics, labor economics, and applied econometrics.