Teaching statement

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Teaching experience

I have rich teaching experience with diverse student populations at both the University of Pittsburgh and the Chinese Hong Kong University. I have worked as a Teaching Assistant for several courses including Statistical Methods, Introduction to Microeconomics, Intermediate Microeconomics for undergraduate students and Advanced Macroeconomics I and II for Ph.D. students. In addition to being a teaching assistant, I also worked as the co-instructor for the undergraduate Labor Economics class and served as a student mentor in the Economics department for the 2018-2019 academic year, which is a one-to-one mentor program to help junior graduate students to prepare for research. My commitment to providing high-quality instruction is demonstrated by my consistently high teaching evaluations. In the two semesters that I served as the teaching assistant for Ph.D. level Advanced Macroeconomic classes, which is one of the most difficult courses for Ph.D. students, my average teaching effectiveness score was 4.6 out of 5. Additionally, on a 5-point scale, students rated that I created a good learning environment at 4.7; that I was accessible at 4.72; and that they learned a lot at 4.61. Finally, more than 90% of responding students reported that they would recommend me as an instructor to others and that they would take another economics class with me. I also maintain a good relationship with the students I taught before and they would like to ask me questions in terms of their ongoing studies and research, though I am not working as their TA anymore.

Teaching philosophy

One of my primary goals as an instructor is to ensure that students leave my class with a deeper understanding of the material and, more importantly, of how it can facilitate critical thinking. Since students are still in their formative years, their viewpoints and ability to solve problems later in life are shaped in their classrooms. In my experience, students are most engaged when the instructor is clear and concise and arouses the interests of students in that course. This is particularly important for college students as learning is mostly self-motivated. Previous studies have shown the importance of instructors on students' achievement (Lavy, 2002).

To develop the skills necessary to create an environment conducive to learning for undergraduates, I place emphasis on combining economic theory with real-world applications in teaching introductory courses in Economics. For example, when learning marginal utility, I explained it with real-life examples as follows. Zero marginal utility is when having more of an item brings no extra measure of satisfaction. For example, if you receive two copies of the same issue of a magazine, that extra copy has little added value. Positive marginal utility is when buying extra versions of an item is satisfying. One such example would be a store promotion where customers can walk out with a free pair of shoes if they buy two pairs upfront. Negative

marginal utility is where too much of an item is actually detrimental. For example, while the correct dose of antibiotics can kill harmful bacteria, too much can harm a person's body.

I rely on a number of active learning techniques to facilitate high levels of student engagement in my class. First, I encourage and organize group discussions and ask the students to share their own examples of economic concepts. Second, I create guided notes for my students, i.e. handouts that outline each lecture with space left for notes and remarks. These provide students with the structure and organization of the materials while still requiring the focused involvement of blackboard-based lectures. Finally, I provide quizzes covering a variety of real-life examples to help students check their understanding of the learning materials.

The teaching for graduate students is tailored differently than undergraduates. The goal for graduate students learning is to help them conduct their independent research. The goal of teaching is not only to understand the materials but also to stimulate innovation. In the first stage, I will help junior Ph.D. students to learn the advanced materials, which are much difficult to understand and economic intuition plays a more important role. I always start with the simplest model and examples to illustrate the mechanism and intuition. For example, when I teach dynamic models, I usually start with a two-period model to illustrate the tradeoff between periods. I also show the way to solve a model by using software like Python in class to guide them step by step. In the second stage, I will help them learn how to use the learning materials for their independent research. Since different students have different interests, I connect the learning materials with various topics of research and studies based on the framework and introduce the real-life application of economic theory. The homework I assign to the students will stimulate them to think critically, master useful learning tools, and develop their innovative ideas to solve the problems.

Teaching Interests

As indicated in my teaching experience, I am well equipped to teach Introduction to Microeconomics, Intermediate Microeconomics, Statistical method, Labor economics for undergraduates and Advanced Macroeconomics for graduate students. Within my field, I would be especially interested in teaching and designing courses in Labor economics, Econometrics and Structural Estimation at both graduate and undergraduate level.