

Teaching Statement

Great teaching begins with empathy. I believe that every student possesses the potential for greatness, but this potential can only be unlocked when we recognize and understand the great diversity of backgrounds in the classroom, whether they are rigorous or rudimentary. While others may dismiss a struggling student as inept and under-prepared, I understand that their circumstances are not solely their own doing. In this spirit, I aim to ensure everyone that enters the classroom is given instruction, attention, and opportunity at the highest level, without placing blame on the student.

First and foremost, I want every student to know that my intention is for them to succeed. I signal this intention by cultivating an inclusive classroom environment where a student can feel confident asking questions without fear of judgement. I never claim that a concept is obvious or simple, and stress that everyone can understand through exploration and inquiry. Beyond the classroom, I take my availability seriously. I strategically plan office hours to ensure optimal attendance and extend my hours in exam weeks. Furthermore, I remind students of my availability at the end of each lecture, signaling my genuine interest in their questions or concerns with the course material. In addition, my office hours are flexible, recognizing that students may need extra time beyond the scheduled slots for additional assistance. This flexibility reinforces my commitment to their success.

In preparation for classes, I take pride in writing lectures. Every lecture is original, regardless of how many times I have taught a course. This is an intentional commitment device to ensure I have meticulously reviewed the material, yet it also provides an opportunity to implement new concepts, intuition, or feedback I may have obtained since the last time teaching the subject. Moreover, I strive to make each lecture self-contained. Lectures are written deliberately in a style so that students can refer and remember the logical structure of the arguments. Typically, lectures are organized with an outline of the main idea, followed by intuition, derivation, examples, and finally, a link to a previous concept.

Within the classroom, I bring an energetic lecture style. I believe that the classroom should be an engaging destination for students, and I take particular care that each is taught with a touch of theatre. I walk across the room, change intonations, ask questions, and make quips when appropriate. But most importantly, I take moments to outwardly marvel at certain economic results that are a fantastic feat of human knowledge. For instance, when teaching the ordinary least squares estimator, I take extra time to comment the brilliance behind its intuitive mechanics. In doing so, I hope to instill the passion I have for modern economics, as it is truly a remarkable accomplishment.

Outside the classroom, I stress consistent engagement with the material. In each course where I am the instructor of record, I create original weekly homework assignments to ensure that students are actively and consistently engaging with the material. Each homework assignment is graded for accuracy, although students are explicitly informed that they can work together or receive assistance in office hours. To manage the grading workload, I employ a strategy where I select a small portion of the assignment for grading without prior knowledge from the students. By doing this, students are incentivized to attempt and complete every question, regardless of the difficulty. However, students are rewarded with a large share of their grade dedicated to these assignments. In the past, I have allocated 35% of their course grade to homework assignments. This allows students who exert more effort, attend office hours, and think carefully about harder problems to be rewarded with a higher course grade.

I take every opportunity to teach more courses in effort to master the craft. During both the academic year and summer months, I consistently volunteer for supplemental appointments. In addition, I relish the opportunity to teach courses I have never taught before. In the past year, I have taught two courses for the first time, a research-oriented course for high-school students and the highest-level econometrics course for undergraduates. Embracing new teaching challenges not only keeps my approach fresh and exciting, but also contributes to my continuous professional development as an educator.

Last, I am critical of any lecture or class I teach. After each session, I recall situations where I feel students are unengaged and devise ways to mitigate this in the next iteration. Moreover, this self-reflection extends to my teaching evaluations, where I take the time to read each comment to look for objective ways in which I can improve. I do not take these comments personally, but view them as a way to genuinely improve my craft.

In essence, teaching at the highest level is my unwavering career goal. It brings me immense joy, purpose, and offers continuous intellectual stimulation and challenge. It is the driving force behind my decision to receive a PhD.