

# Teaching Statement

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## 1 Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is a class is successful if students can use the broad concepts they learn outside of the classroom. This goal expresses itself in two main ways. Firstly, in my classes, I stress the ways in which economic tools teach logical thinking. Secondly, I emphasize a holistic understanding of the principles behind the concepts so that students can interpret economic data. I do this specifically by structuring my courses around a framework for students to accumulate knowledge.

In my view, one of the most important things students can learn in an economics class is how to apply logical thinking. Even students who do not plan to continue an education or a career in economics come away from my classes with an increased ability to apply a sequence of logical steps to reach a conclusion, whether in a mathematical framework or in their writing. This goal is reflected in my course evaluations, in which 100% students in my “Principles of Economics” class responded that the assignments or exams required them to use independent thinking. Learning the ability to apply logical thinking to classwork benefits them regardless of their future career path, and more importantly, in their lives outside of school and work.

Further, using economic tools to develop a deeper understanding of issues that impact their lives and topics that concern them, such as climate change or labor laws, both moti-

vates students in class and allows them to make more informed decisions in their lives. By meaningfully presenting the topics students care about through an economic lens, they can see the value of economic methods and even potentially see themselves as economists. For example, I have found that students can often better grasp the assumptions behind economic models when I emphasize those assumptions impact results about minimum wage.

The second element of my teaching philosophy involves providing a structure for the class which makes it natural for students to retain the general concepts. My experience as a teacher reflects my belief that organization in classes is integral to both students' understanding of the material and to their enjoyment of the course and the field as a whole. This organization extends well beyond the logistics of the course, such as online resources, grades, the syllabus, and having well-articulated expectations. My commitment to logistical organization is reflected in my course evaluations, in which 100% of students agreed that my class was well-organized, and three students wrote that the class was organized in their comments.

However, in my view, more important in terms of organization is how the class is structured. Each topic should build on one another to create a framework which the students can comprehend as a whole. I have found that students find complex topics much more manageable when the relationship between the topics is well-organized in their minds. Learning new information is easier when students can relate it to something they already know. For example, in my "Principles of Economics" class, I spend a longer-than-average time on supply and demand because I have found that when students are confident in the basics of the class, they are well-prepared to succeed in the more advanced topics later in the course. When students understand the overarching framework to which all the topics in the class belong and how these topics support each other to build that framework, each topic is less overwhelming to students, and students are more engaged to work through topics which they find difficult. Creating this framework takes practice and careful, logical thinking by the teacher. I have

found that students note this structure and respond well to it: in one student evaluation, the student wrote, “I felt that this course was well structured; the content was clearly and logically organized ... which has not been the case in many of my previous classes.”

Further, this organized framework encourages students to ask questions in class and to study outside of class because it creates an environment in which it is clear to them what areas are important and what skills they need to improve. Students ask questions in class when they feel empowered to do so because they are confident in what they do know. As a teacher, I believe it is my responsibility to create an environment in which students are comfortable asking questions. This fact is reflected in my student evaluations for “Principles of Economics,” an introductory course, in which 78% of students “strongly agreed” that they were treated with respect in the course. One way I have found to foster such an environment for students is to create a Google form for anonymous feedback. This is particularly helpful for freshman and sophomore classes.

By providing an organized framework for students to connect different elements of the class, it prevents students from simply memorizing a list of disconnected facts which they will quickly forget after the class ends. Instead, an organized framework allows students to retain overall understanding from the class, even if they forget specific details over time. This overall understanding allows students to apply their knowledge from the class to situations outside the class, including other classes, future research, or real-world applications. Specifically, 78% of students in my “Principles of Economics” class agreed that they “learned the material well enough to help another student in this course.” Responses like this indicate that students are confident in what they know and understand how the topics fit together: if students can help another student with the material, they understand it on a deep level, meaning they can use it in settings outside the classroom. Keeping this goal in mind when I am teaching extends my goals beyond simply classwork by engaging both students who plan to continue in their economics education and students who do not.

## 2 Experience

I have taught undergraduate economics classes and have been the teaching assistant for both undergraduate and MBA classes. Through these experiences, I have had the opportunity to develop different strategies that work for different groups of students. MBA students frequently have different concerns and backgrounds than undergraduates, and as a teacher, I find that it is beneficial to student engagement to consider the students' overall goals outside of the class in considering the structure and overall approach to the topics covered. Specifically, MBA students often to come class with questions related to their careers already, whereas undergraduates benefit from a broader approach which allows them to learn more information about potential careers.

However, for all types of students, I stress the importance of being able to interpret and understand economic concepts so that students will able to apply what they learn in my economics classes to new settings. My commitment to this goal is reflected in my teaching evaluations, in which 89% of students responded that my class “encouraged [them] to analyze and/or apply the concepts and skills taught in this course.”

I have previously been the sole instructor for “Principles of Economics” for undergraduate students, which is an introductory class covering both micro and macroeconomics. My goal for students in this class is to learn to apply economic analysis to individual consumer, business, and government decision-making, to interpret basic macroeconomic statistics, and to appreciate the effectiveness of various policies. To assist students in meeting my course objectives for this class, I encourage students to see me outside of class where I can personalize my advice and presentation of the subject matter. For example, in office hours, I am able to relate topics to the specific student's interests and current knowledge. This personalized approach has been particular effective when teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic because students are often hesitant to ask questions via remote learning. I have

also found it to be effective in working with MBA's, who are generally highly engaged in the subject material and are actively looking to connect it to their work and lives in a personal manner which can be best addressed in a one-on-one setting. I have also found it to be beneficial for students who have English as their second language.

Within class, I have found that weekly quizzes - which students may take multiple times and receive their highest score - helps greatly in giving students feedback on how they are progressing while still giving them the opportunity to learn and become more comfortable with the material. This method is particularly important in introductory classes in which students may be struggling with some of the mathematics requirements. Initially, I did not allow students to retake quizzes, but after receiving mid-semester feedback from students, I found that students value the opportunity to correct their mistakes and learn from them quickly, which helps them feel more confident with the next topics which build on the current material. This feedback is reflected in my course evaluations for the class, in which two-thirds of the students agreed that the quizzes promoted their engagement and learning. Specifically, student comments include: "I really like the quizzes. [T]hey incentivized me to study each chapter."

In the spring of 2024, I will teach "Economic History of the United States from 1865 to Present" to undergraduates at Northwestern University. While many economics classes are lecture-based, I have designed this class to be a largely discussion-based class. It combines reading current academic papers in economic history with intuition about basic econometric techniques such as instrumental variable analysis and difference-in-difference estimation. Students will be evaluated based on short writing assignments, in-class written exams, and their participation in class discussion. Because students can be hesitant to volunteer their opinions in class, I will require students to submit two comments or questions about every assigned paper twenty-four prior to class. Reading these comments and questions before class allows me to use them to direct class discussion. The reason I have designed the discussion

this way is because I have previously found that undergraduate students are often reluctant to volunteer answers to questions in class but also that cold-calling on students fosters an environment in which students are too nervous to do their best work. By requiring students to come up with their questions and comments ahead of time and submit them to me, I ensure that the students have read the papers, and that when I ask for discussion, the students are more comfortable answering because they have thought about their answers already. In general, I have found that using discussion-based classes when possible encourages students' motivation to learn the course material because they are able to see their opinions about the material as valuable.

As a Ph.D. student and postdoctoral scholar, I have worked closely with two of my undergraduate research assistants. One of these RA's has since gone onto a Master's degree in economics himself. In working with RA's, I believe that part of my responsibility is to mentor their understanding of how economic research is conducted. As such, I do not simply assign them a task. I begin by explaining the overall goal of the research project, and then I communicate how their task fits into the broader structure of the project. I teach my RA's to do basic data scraping and data matching, which are skills they can use in a future research career in economics. Further, as a postdoctoral scholar, I have taught a current Ph.D. student to use ArcGIS. These types of logistical skills - data cleaning, programming, etc. - can be time-consuming to learn alone, and they are not something specifically taught in most Ph.D. programs. As I progress in my career, every person I mentor will have different goals, interests and needs, and learning to do research is substantially accelerated by the process of actually doing research. Therefore, it is my belief that working closely with students on their own research interests - whether through teaching them specific skills like programming or more broadly through coauthoring - is an irreplaceable method of mentoring students. I have benefited from this close mentoring myself and therefore understand its value.

I look forward to the opportunity to teach further and to incorporate new teaching

methods into my classes. Given my research interests, I am eager to teach classes in economic history, industrial organization, and applied econometrics. It is my experience that incorporating the teacher's own research into class work helps students understand the research process and encourage them to pursue further work in economics. Additionally, I am particularly enthusiastic about teaching MBA courses: these students frequently desire to expand their methodological toolkit to answer specific questions which they bring to the class. While MBA students often bring questions with them, they benefit from a deeper ability to interpret statistics and economic data to develop a rich answer to these questions.