

Teaching Statement

My approach to teaching economics and public policy is centered around three core principles: i) encouraging intellectual curiosity is one of the most meaningful impacts a teacher can have on their students; ii) economics teachers are most effective when they relate new material to as few fundamental concepts as possible; and iii) students derive invaluable confidence from obtaining technical capabilities that economics teachers are in a distinct position to impart.

As an Assistant Professor, I would endeavor to pursue these principles and lean on my own intellectual journey when teaching undergraduate courses in applied econometrics, microeconomic theory, urban economics, public economics, labor economics, industrial organization, and various topics in applied policy analysis. While I am confident that with time I could design world-class courses in each of these topics, I believe I am especially well-equipped to teach courses on economic opportunity and urban poverty - the focus on my research.

That students appreciate my approach to teaching economics and public policy is evinced through numerous teaching awards and exceptional feedback from both undergraduate and doctoral students, which can be found in my [teaching portfolio](#).

Teaching Philosophy

Develop intellectual curiosity. My academic performance during the first three years of my undergraduate degree was underwhelming. Uninformed in the significance of abstract notions of indifference curves, profit isoquants, and equilibrium, I lacked the motivation to trudge through seemingly endless sets of Kuhn-Tucker conditions, resulting in several grades unbecoming of a future academic. Only when I stumbled upon a history of economic thought class did I begin to appreciate the power and transparency of economics in predicting human behavior and informing public policy. Placing economics in its historical context allowed me to view indifference curves as one part the result of centuries of careful philosophical deliberation and another part a critical ingredient of tractable sociological and policy predictions - a faraway cry from the gradient of a consumer's optimization problem. Spurred by this new-found appreciation of economics, I subsequently committed myself to my academic coursework, which in turn placed me in good standing to pursue meaningful employment both within and outside of academia.

While each student's path to academic dedication will be different, my personal experience convinced me that encouraging intellectual curiosity is one of the most meaningful impacts a Professor can have on their students. Whether one places economics in its intellectual context, demonstrates its power in predicting counterintuitive behavior, or uses it to solve relatable dilemmas students face, effective teaching brings economics to life for all students, regardless of

their academic ability and sociodemographic background. I have acted on this belief throughout my time as a teaching assistant, and especially with my undergraduate Intermediate Microeconomic Theory students. For example, to engage students at the beginning of each weekly review section, I posted open-ended true or false statements that students were to discuss among themselves with economic theory. By selecting statements that were most related to student's experiences – such as whether “students who inherit money are expected to invest more in their education” – I sought to encourage personal reflection and relate abstract economic theory to students' own lives.

Internalize core economic concepts. Most students are unable to recall the specific concepts and empirical facts discussed in their undergraduate economics classes. What may instead stick with undergraduate students is an appreciation for the fundamental concepts of contemporary economics like optimization, equilibrium, and identification. Reflecting upon my undergraduate experience convinces me that orienting teaching around a few fundamental concepts not only helps provide students with an appreciation for economics but also facilitates the assimilation of new knowledge. With a deep understanding of optimization and equilibrium, new economic problems can be interpreted in an existing framework, making bearable a potentially overwhelming set of economics material.

My teaching relates new economic topics to fundamental concepts like optimization and equilibrium in salient and transparent ways. For example, when discussing compensating differentials with intermediate microeconomic theory students, instead of introducing the topic as another theory one must memorize to explain the observed distribution of similarly skilled workers across different-paying jobs, I first discuss its microfoundations; I ask my students to consider the consequence of workers optimally choosing between a menu of jobs that vary along multiple characteristics. I then explicitly emphasize how the topic is a simple application of consumer theory to a new problem.

Impart technical competence. It is uncommon to pursue structural economics research as a PhD student at the Harvard Kennedy School. One partial explanation for this fact is that the program does not encourage students to take PhD macroeconomics or other quantitative economic theory classes. Fortunately for me, during the second year of my PhD coursework, I happened to take classes in industrial organization with Professors Ariel Pakes and Robin Lee. These classes required us to estimate a variety of structural economic models. While challenging at the time, upon completing these exercises, I obtained the confidence to pursue structural economics research myself. I certainly did not feel more technically able than my HKS peers, but the experiences gained in these classes demystified for me a once-intimidating field of economics.

This experience informed my teaching philosophy: students derive invaluable confidence from obtaining technical capabilities that economics teachers are in a distinct position to impart. The confidence I obtained from estimating a structural model under apt guidance was invaluable in forming my research ambitions. When instructing advanced undergraduate economics students, I plan to incorporate one or two technical projects into required classwork. I would, however, break these projects into very manageable components (e.g. week 1 & 2 – clean data and produce descriptive statistics; week 3 & 4 – estimate the most basic version of the model possible; week 5 & 6 – compute the standard errors for this model; etc.), checking in and sharing partial solutions with students as the project progresses. The goal would be to have each student produce a technically sophisticated quantitative model by the conclusion of the course. Equipped with this experience, I hope students acquire the confidence to pursue technical pursuits inside and outside of the classroom.