Statement of Teaching Philosophy and Experience

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My teaching philosophy is guided by my experience as a student of economics and mathematics. I believe that economics provides a unique lens with which to view the world. As educators we have the opportunity to introduce students to a framework for thinking about social problems in which we carefully consider individual choices and the incentives that guide those choices. This framework helps students to develop the ability to look beyond the immediate impacts of a policy proposal and to consider the behavioral responses that result from changes to the underlying incentive structure. This perspective is useful in personal life but also to understand important policy debates. As a result, I often tie classroom lessons to current events. I believe in creating challenging courses, but also being supportive of struggling students who make an effort to learn the material.

I was introduced to economics as a first year undergraduate at Miami University. In my first course, Professor Michael Curme taught microeconomics. He introduced me to the economic way of thinking by carefully crafting each lesson to a policy issue or historical event in a fascinating manner. The quality of Professor Curme's instruction inspired me and was eventually an important factor in my choice to purse the study of economics as a career. Therefore, I believe that good professors can make a significant impact on students' lives.

I experienced another formative lesson as I studied mathematical analysis at the University of Chicago. Professor Monica Visan taught how to construct proofs with exceptional clarity. Her class was very challenging, but she was also supportive of students who were struggling to understand the formal mathematical language. With this combination we learned a great deal and in the end were proud of our work.

As an teaching assistant at UCLA, I have taught four classes in microeconomic theory and econometrics. I work hard to incorporate my positive student experiences into my teaching. I try to impress upon students the unique way of thinking that economics offers. For example, I encourage students to always ask the question: "and then what?". Meaning if a policy is enacted, how might individuals respond and could these reactions counteract the original intent of the policy? Also, I try to analyze current events with the tools learned in lectures to emphasize the importance and relevance of economic analysis. Finally, I challenge my students by adding some novel and difficult problems. However, I am also very receptive to offering extra help in office hours or by appointment. I find it exciting to see students take a genuine interest in the field since these students inevitably remind me of the excitement I felt in exploring economics for the first time.

One course that I have particularly enjoyed teaching is introductory econometrics. This class provides an excellent opportunity to combine the insights of economic theory with the highly valuable skills of data analysis. The focus is on developing the conceptual framework and empirical tools to identify causal effects relevant to economic analysis. I start with basic regress analysis and then move on to methods designed to exploit natural experiments such as difference-in-difference and instrumental variables estimators. This course develops fundamental skills such as the ability to think about potential unobserved differences between groups that may affect observed outcomes. For each class I develop detailed notes that guide students through the concepts. However, my lessons do not strictly follow the handouts, but rather emphasize the key concepts through examples. These examples convey the essential ideas in an compelling format and often rely on figures to provide a visual representation. The handouts provide a more complete reference for students and show the mathematical derivations clearly. This helps to accommodate students with different learning styles. In addition to providing essential skills to understand causal analysis, this course also provides students with practical programming skills that are valuable for a wide variety of careers.