

Teaching Statement

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To make a long statement short, teaching is a big passion of mine and I dedicate time and energy to it. I have been involved in teaching since I was an undergraduate junior. During my academic career, I have had the pleasure to teach several Economic courses, both as an instructor and as an undergraduate and graduate teaching assistant. These courses have covered introductory and intermediate modules in microeconomics, statistics and econometrics, as well as upper-level applied micro courses such as labor and public economics. Although this is just the beginning of a long career, this experience made me realize that I don't see myself as a person who will ever fully stop teaching. I view teaching as a powerful device that, when imparted effectively, can improve students' long-term outcomes, as documented by recent research (e.g., [Chetty et al., 2014](#)). In addition, by connecting coursework to the real world we can prompt students to learn and help them become better-informed citizens about current economic and social issues and about alternative ways in which public policy can address them. So, I take this part of my academic job very seriously, and my wish is to eventually belong to the group of 'education influencers.'

As an instructor, my overarching goal is to be rigorous and make learning economics fun for students, to foster intuitive understanding and critical thinking in a nurturing environment, and to help students master critical tools and concepts required in the course and related fields. I try to encourage students to question their priors and think critically about a problem or a situation by integrating it with ongoing policy debates. For instance, a common practice before I introduce a new topic in my lectures is to run a quick poll to gauge the *ex-ante* opinion from students (e.g., what's the income share of the top 1% in the US? Would increasing the marginal income tax rate make you work more or less? Etc.). Students are asked to guess anonymously through a QR code and then we compare their answers to the facts. This strategy usually triggers a lot of interest in the topic because it makes them realize that there is value in what they are about to learn. Collaboration in the classroom through group work is key for this purpose. In some cases, I ask them to discuss in groups of 3 or 4 students before scanning the QR code, and answers tend to be more accurate, on average, even when the theory and facts have not yet been discussed. In addition, it's a simple way to make them participate and feel that they belong there. During Office Hours, I try to resolve doubts on a one-to-one basis, or by fostering small group discussions if the session is packed.

To make the subject accessible I make all the material publicly available in my webpage. To give structure, I start every class by displaying the outline of the themes already covered and how they are linked to what's coming next; when discussing each topic, I explain how it relates to the lecture's material and why it could be useful in the future. I believe this helps students have a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Notwithstanding, I also believe that flexibility matters and thus I'm constantly adapting the material to my students' needs. For instance, in my current Public Economics course I spend two classes doing a refresher of intermediate micro theory and empirical methods that are necessary to follow the subsequent material. In Introduction to Economics, I review some basic calculus so that students with a weaker background in mathematics can understand the material. I am conscious of the different learning styles and paces, and the implications that this can have in the way I approach lectures.

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My preferred subjects to teach are Public Economics, Labor Economics, Microeconomics, and Applied Tools. I am equally interested in teaching undergraduate, graduate (MA, MBA, Ph.D.), and professional students. Teaching has been a rewarding and indispensable part of my undergraduate and graduate education, and I am especially enjoying it now as an Assistant Professor because I have the freedom to design the courses, prepare my own material, problem sets, and final exams. One of the last pieces of advice I received from my Ph.D. supervisor was that teaching is a building block in our careers and is a continuing and long-term process that takes time to refine. Notwithstanding, we should be hands on along the journey in order to succeed. After my first two years as an Assistant Professor, I can see how right he is and I look forward to staying in this path (and keep improving) in the coming years.

Lastly, I would like to close this statement by sharing two recent enriching professional experiences. First, in May 2022 I achieved the status of Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy ([AFHEA](#)). This is a Postgraduate Certificate required by UK universities to consolidate teaching and support learning in higher education (20 hours of class + 180 hours of individual study). It is a full-year course that examines theories of how students learn, it explores effective methods and technologies to enhance teaching (e.g., small versus large groups), how to best evaluate students and provide feedback, and ways to improve the learning environment (e.g., diversity, how to accommodate students with disabilities, etc.). The interdisciplinary nature of the course allowed me to learn from the teaching styles and practices of peers in other departments as well.

Second, the teaching evaluations during my first two years as an Assistant Professor have been encouraging, even in the pandemic context of remote and asynchronous teaching. The most recent teaching evaluations of the two undergraduate courses that I teach at Nottingham suggest that I am a highly effective instructor (see [here](#) and [here](#)). The majority of students think that I am good at explaining things and approachable, I convey enthusiasm for the subject, and that the sessions are well structured and encourage students to study. Here are some answers to an open-ended question in the survey that support the overall average evaluation:

"It was really interesting and made more so by the empirical studies used to support the content. He was also very approachable and welcomed questions. Considering the difficulty of the topic it was explained clearly so that we could understand."

"The professor knows a lot about the topics and knows how to explain it"

"The slides are very detailed and the lecturer explains concepts very well."

*"Lectures were very engaging due to Dario's enthusiasm.
Tutorial questions were also at a good difficulty level - challenging but not impossible."*

"A strength of the course is Dario's ability to give constructive feedback."

Now that in-person teaching has resumed, I am confident that my teaching and the quality of the lectures will improve (as I'm already witnessing). The next round of evaluations will be ready in December 2022 and I'm looking forward to reading and learning from my students' constructive feedback.