

TEACHING STATEMENT

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I have found teaching to be extremely rewarding. From 2011 when I was an assistant at the Higher School of Economics to being a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Minnesota, my experience covers various dimensions of teaching economics. In particular, I taught courses ranging from high school *Principles of Economics* and undergraduate *Macroeconomics*, *Economic Thinking*, and *History of Economic Thought* to Ph.D. level *Microeconomic Analysis*. I worked with groups that differ by size (from 5-10 to over 300 students), language (I taught both in English and Russian), age (from high school students to senior economics instructors from regional Russian universities), and the level of specialization (from an audience who attended my public lectures to Ph.D. students at the University of Minnesota). Overall, my teaching activities included in-person classes, online lectures, and assisting the professor in online course *Macroeconomics* in Coursera.

My teaching philosophy is grounded in decreasing barriers to learning. The first step in creating a successful learning environment is making sure that the students have access to all the necessary study materials even if they are unable to attend a class. To do this, I post all my course materials online. For example, I wrote a tutorial with solutions to the mechanism design problems for *Microeconomic Analysis* which has been used for a number of years by the teaching assistants that followed me at the University of Minnesota. In order to make the class material more accessible to students, I also try to provide flexible office hours and to respond to students' emails promptly.

Mentoring students who do not have access to materials that help their understanding of the course content can help bridge the gap underrepresented students may face. One way I promote diversity in economics is by active mentoring. I serve as a mentor in the Graduate Applications International Network (GAIN), an organization that supports prospective African graduate students applying for Master's and Ph.D. programs in economics and related fields. As a mentor, I support my mentee by sharing my own experience about the application process and studying in a Ph.D. program, reviewing the materials, and providing relevant information and resources. In addition, while I have been doing my Ph.D. in the United States, I stay connected to Russian students and share knowledge with them. Most of the time this sharing is done through short courses or public lectures. For example, over the last year, I was invited to present at the webinar organized by the Higher School of Economics for its students where I shared my experience of applying to Ph.D. programs and being a Ph.D. student. I also gave a public online lecture for Russian high school and university students where I talked about inequality, heterogeneity, and big data in economics.

My other important role as an economics instructor is to teach students how to think like an economist. To do so, I always try to illustrate the concepts and ideas using anecdotal evidence. For example, when I cover the topics of inequality or poverty, I refer to my own example. I was born

in a developing country, right during the process of dissolution of the Soviet Union, and learned about poverty and inequality long before reading about them in the books. This approach allows me to explain even the most sophisticated ideas in simple words. Beyond that, when I explain economic models, I start with the simplest version. By doing this, I am able to make sure that the students can see the real-world problems and situations behind the math equations. I encourage my students to ask questions. What has been very important is that I am pretty honest with them. When I do not have an immediate answer, I always do my homework, and in the next class I give an answer and briefly describe the way I discovered it.

As a teacher, I also work hard to help the students in developing skills that are useful not only in the other courses but also in their future professional careers. In 2013 and 2014, I was a teaching assistant for *Economic Thinking*. This is the course that the first-year undergraduate economics students take right after beginning their study at the Higher School of Economics, and it is meant to build their economic intuition. Because it was completely new, I actively worked on its curriculum design together with the professors. In addition to building economic intuition, the main learning outcome I was trying to achieve in my recitations was to develop the analytical, critical thinking, writing, and the presentation skills of my students. To achieve these goals, I asked them to submit a short essay on a relevant economic problem, formulated as a question without a single correct answer (e.g., “Is Technological Progress Good or Bad?”), every two weeks. In their writing assignments, the students were expected to make a claim and provide reasons to support it. Beyond that, I made my recitations interactive by asking some students to prepare group presentations and lead the discussion with the rest of the class. It was a truly rewarding feeling to see how the quality of essays and presentations was improving over time. Months and years later, I have heard from many of my former students that the skills they developed in our recitations were crucially important both in subsequent university courses and at the early stages of their professional careers.

I strongly believe that the process of building teaching skills and competencies is life-long. For every new course, I use my experience and feedback from the students to improve the way I teach and the materials I use. Moreover, I also take advantage of being a researcher by continuing to develop my presentation and public speaking skills at research seminars and conferences. For my hard work and focus on improving teaching techniques, I received the *Best Teacher Award* at the Higher School of Economics in 2013, 2014, and 2015. Beyond that, I gave an interview about my teaching methods to *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, one of the largest Russian newspapers. However, my main personal accomplishments are the successes of my students and their words of gratitude even years after I taught them. Some of my former students whom I taught *Macroeconomics* at the Higher School of Economics are now Ph.D. students, and it is a great happiness to see that their research interests are tightly related to macroeconomics.

Overall, my experiences of teaching at the universities and giving public lectures have shown me that I greatly enjoy the rewarding challenge of teaching economics. I believe effective teaching requires student access, awareness, and motivation. A breakdown in any of these channels will limit the ability of students to transfer knowledge to new applications. With this guiding philosophy, I do my best to make my classes accessible, welcoming, and productive.