

TEACHING STATEMENT

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While at Boston College, I served as an instructor for undergraduate statistics and a teaching assistant for the statistics Stata lab. In Fall and Spring 2015, I taught three sections of undergraduate introductory statistics. Over Fall 2014, Spring 2016, and Fall 2016 I taught six sections of the Stata lab. Each section of these two courses had around 30 students.

In the Stata lab, I taught undergraduate students Stata skills while also requiring them to write a research paper using regression analysis. This was a lofty goal for undergraduates who had no experience in either Stata or data analysis. To motivate my students, I designed suggested topics that included a specific research question along with the background literature, sample data, and a hand-selected podcast. The podcasts from *EconTalk*, *Freakonomics*, and *Planet Money* brought the research to life and helped students grasp the larger significance of the applied economic research. Through this method, my students replicated findings and answered various applied economics questions including the following: Is there an unexplained gender-wage gap? Does altering the price of a cigarette change smoking behavior? What factors influence the decision to have an additional child? How do physical looks impact market wage? By the end of the semester, the students were engaged with the research question and excited to communicate their findings in a formal paper. The use of outside materials brought the research questions to life and gave students the motivation they needed to learn Stata as a tool to accommodate their larger interest in the topic.

In the statistics lecture, I designed my course to be interactive and to go beyond textbook problem solving. To do this, I incorporated visual displays, real-life applications, and group work to engage the students. For example, while teaching statistical distributions, I first covered the theory and equations on the blackboard. Then, I used interactive displays of the distributions on the projector to show students how the representations shift when parameters change. Afterward, I had them work in groups to devise examples of real life variables that could be modeled with each of the distributions. Based on their suggestions, I tried to find data covering their applications and showed them plots using Stata. On exams, I asked students to recall these examples and suggest different applications, such as class height or the number of text messages received per hour. During exam review sessions, students appeared excited to describe each distribution and create their own applications. This tiered system of emphasizing the theoretical concepts with visual displays, real-life applications, and group discussions helped my students develop a framework for understanding and applying the material that extended beyond basic problem-solving.

My student evaluations are the best evidence of my ability to engage students and effectively communicate the material. Table 1 presents a summary of the evaluations I have received as an instructor for the statistics course, with the full set of evaluations posted on [my website](#). Tables 2 and 3 show select comments from my evaluations. In recognition of my success as a teacher, I was awarded the Donald J. White Teaching Award in 2015 and 2016. I hope to continue to build on these skills in my future career as a professor.

Table 1: Evaluations for Instructor of Statistics

	Fall 2015 (05)	Fall 2015 (04)	Spring 2015
1. The instructor was prepared.	4.83	4.78	4.79
2. The instructor was available for help outside of class.	4.79	4.81	4.83
3. The instructor returned assignments/tests conscientiously.	4.72	4.85	4.78
4. The instructor showed enthusiasm about the subject matter.	4.79	4.78	4.83
5. The instructor stimulated interest in the subject matter.	4.79	4.52	4.70
6. The instructor's explanations were clear.	4.62	4.41	4.54
7. The instructor treated students with respect.	4.89	4.85	4.83
8. How would you rate this instructor overall as a teacher?	4.79	4.48	4.58
NOTE: All scores out of 5.0			

Table 2: Would you recommend this course to other students, majors, etc.? Why or why not?

Verbatim Student Comments
<i>"Yes, instructor was fabulous"</i>
<i>"I really enjoyed this course and appreciated how engaged Professor Velasco was. She was extremely conscientious and clearly wanted to see her students succeed which made what can be a difficult subject seem much more manageable."</i>
<i>"She should teach econometrics because she is good at making complex dry subjects and making them enjoyable. Also it seems to be her passion."</i>
<i>"Yes if you get the chance to take professor velasco for anything, definitely take her"</i>
<i>"I would definitely recommend this to any students who think that statistics for Econ is going to be difficult, because she actually cares if you learn the intuition behind it."</i>
<i>"Yes absolutely, Lauren is one of the nicest professors I've had at BC. She definitely wants you to succeed and is always very willing to help you. Great teacher"</i>
<i>"Yes!!! Professor Hoehn is very approachable and welcoming at all times. She is willing to answer all the questions that students have until they all understand the material thoroughly. She gives advices of how to study well for this course and her notes are great."</i>
<i>" Yes, Lauren Velasco was a great Stats professor and she did a good job preparing me for Econometrics in both a challenging but manageable way."</i>
<i>"Absolutely. Lauren is both knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and I learned a lot from the course."</i>
<i>" Yes. Lauren's class was clear and concise, teaching about statistics and helped me to understand the material thoroughly while making it an enjoyable class "</i>
<i>"Yes, I think Lauren manages teaching a difficult subject very well. I spoke with friends in other sections of Statistics and we covered the same material yet I seemed to have the most in-depth understanding of the material rather than just memorizing and spitting back out the problems. "</i>
NOTE: All comments taken directly from teaching evaluations, which are provided on my website.

Table 3: What are the strengths of this course?

Verbatim Student Comments
<i>"One of the best teachers I have had at Boston College. Truly cares about her students, always available to help! Lauren was always there for questions both in and outside of class and always responded promptly and on time."</i>
<i>"The notes for this course were extremely well organized. All of the information was easily accessible and the Professor was available for help whenever possible. I felt that I was always well prepared for assessments and that I always had a good understanding of where I stood in the class."</i>
<i>"Professor Velasco was very organized with the notes and was readily available to help students. She showed that she really cared about student's success and was always extremely helpful in office hours. She is always willing to help outside of office hours as well and in class."</i>
<i>"The strengths of this course were contingent upon Lauren's ability to teach very well and effectively. She was very understanding and interested in the technique to which we were digesting statistics. Other professors may only lecture but Lauren had us understanding statistics in a fostering manner. Despite the course's arduousness, Lauren did not make it any easier. Instead she inspired us to take on the challenge and learn to love the complexity that is stats."</i>
<i>"Always used examples of real-world problems to see how the techniques we learned are used."</i>
<i>"The professor was able to meet frequently for help. She was so determined to make sure we understood the material and really wants us to succeed. The homework is really good at using what we learned in class."</i>
<i>"I really liked how organized the teacher was and how she used packets to teach the course. It was a lot of work on her end but it made the student's lives much easier so I really appreciated that. I think her explanations were extremely clear and she was always available and willing to help the students. Also she was an extremely fair person."</i>
NOTE: All comments taken directly from teaching evaluations, which are provided on my website.