

*Teaching philosophy*

I view teaching economics as teaching a skillset for answering questions and thinking about problems. My teaching philosophy can be summarized by three components: learning by doing, repetition, and relevance. The first two elements focus on learning the tools, while the last element is all about applying them. I believe this philosophy is effective for teaching economics because the field is characterized by a few core concepts that are applied in different ways. Learning by doing allows students to understand how concepts operate in a tangible way. Repetition helps solidify the understanding of these concepts and draw the connections between different topics. Finally, relevance is crucial for understanding why these concepts are useful and how they can be applied outside of the classroom.

To illustrate my teaching approach, I will use an example. In 2022, I was recommended for a pilot program in my department to provide tutoring to three PhD students who were having difficulty keeping up with the first-year coursework. Although I would have preferred the role for macro, I was willing to teach micro to accommodate the department needs. As this was a new program, I had the full responsibility to figure out how to implement the tutoring sessions.

I structured each lesson around a specific problem that was related to the material from their last problem set. Focusing on material from the previous week meant that the students had a chance to “learn by doing” on their problem sets before walking through the concepts again with me. I started each lesson by listing key concepts, stating the type of problem, and describing what was standard about the problem before considering any unique “twist.” When solving the problem, I also used numbered steps and tied them back to what we studied the previous week. This emphasizes that although every problem is unique, they are building core skills through repetition.

One thing that I noticed about my students is that they were jaded and losing sight of why they were interested in this program in the first place. To keep them engaged, I made a point to emphasize in my lessons where these skills would be useful later. For example, when discussing Nash bargaining, I mentioned that I was using a similar type of bargaining rule in my own research. Connecting concepts to relevant applications is crucial for retention, especially in introductory classes at any level. Learning the building blocks is challenging and students need to feel that the effort is worth the payoff.

This was a challenging experience, but after the students requested that I continue to work with them over the summer, I knew the care I had taken with my lesson plans was paying off. One student even emailed me after the prelim exam to describe what was on it and how my lessons helped prepare them.

*Teaching experience*

In addition to the tutoring program, I was a graduate student instructor (GSI) for four semesters. I taught financial economics for two semesters with Professor Pablo Ottonello, and one semester each of intermediate microeconomic theory with Professor David Miller and strategy with Lecturer Esteban Peralta. In each class I was responsible for teaching two weekly discussion sections of about 30 students each, holding office hours, grading, and other responsibilities. These courses provided different experiences and challenges that were valuable for shaping my understanding of effective teaching.

Intermediate micro was a large lecture with over 400 students and nine GSIs and it was taught entirely online due to the pandemic. My approach to teaching and lesson plans was similar to the other courses

I taught but I learned a lot about how to manage a large class and how to teach online effectively. I found that class participation was even harder to achieve online, so I would use polls on Zoom to gauge how much time students needed to work independently on problems and which concepts they were struggling with. Maintaining consistent learning experiences with nine instructors can be a challenge, but by rotating the responsibility for designing practice problems and grading exams, we were able to ensure that every student was given the material and attention they needed to succeed. In addition to our review of the standard material, we each gave a three-minute presentation throughout the semester about a paper in micro that we were excited about, and made an effort to highlight work by women and underrepresented minorities. Given the diverse research interests of the GSIs, this was an effective way of showing students how the building blocks they were learning can be used for relevant, real-world problems.

Financial economics was a smaller course with about 140 students across two GSIs. In this setting, I had more responsibility for the material I covered each week as well as administrative responsibilities. I also had not taken this class before the first time I taught it. This experience was valuable because it taught me how to structure lesson plans for someone not familiar with the material and it showed me that I can step outside my comfort zone and succeed.

### *Teaching Interests*

At the undergraduate level, I would like to teach courses on macroeconomics and inequality. At the graduate level, my ideal course would focus on the macroeconomics of labor markets. My ideal classes aside, I have ample teaching experience in areas outside of macroeconomics and my research interests are broad. I am confident that I would be an effective teacher for a wide variety of classes at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

I am interested in teaching macroeconomics and finance classes specifically because they are intimidating for many undergrads. The language can be niche or opaque and students may not be willing to overcome these barriers if they feel the material does not relate to their interests or experiences. My teaching goals in this area are twofold. First, when teaching introductory courses, I emphasize connections to current events and societal problems, as well as the limitations of the models we teach at this level. For example, students do not need to learn the details of heterogeneous agent models to learn that macroeconomists are studying how fiscal and monetary policy can have different effects across age, gender, race, geography, or income group. Second, I aspire to design macro electives that draw in a broad set of students. For example, at all levels, women tend to have higher representation in labor, health, and education fields. Designing electives that engage some of these topics from the lens of macroeconomics could encourage a more diverse set of students to study macro.

### *Teaching effectiveness*

My student evaluations confirm my teaching effectiveness. Over the four courses I taught, my median evaluations for four main questions are summarized as follows,

- "Overall, Caitlin Hegarty was an excellent teacher." 4.6/5
- "Caitlin Hegarty seemed well prepared for class meetings." 4.8/5
- "Caitlin Hegarty explained material clearly." 4.8/5
- "Caitlin Hegarty treated students with respect." 4.9/5

Some highlights from student comments are

- Caitlin is a great GSI. She is really good at explaining material and how to approach problems. She does a good job emphasizing the most important material from lectures that is pertinent to the exams and is always willing to help.
- Caitlin was a great GSI. I would love to take another class under her discussion instruction.
- Caitlin was excellent! I attended a good number of her office hours and I always got a very thorough explanation from her on any questions I had and she did a great job of walking us through complex problems and topics. I really cannot say enough positive stuff about Caitlin, right now I'm expecting to get an A in this course and that definitely would not be the case without her.
- Ms. Hegarty was very respectful of the students in our section, was always prepared for discussion, and gave the students a better understanding of the material.