

Teaching Statement*

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Teaching is an essential part of my job as an academic economist. My own teaching is guided by a philosophy around education formed by extensive experience teaching undergraduate and graduate economics. It is an activity that I have a particular talent for and one that I'm excited to continue practising.

1. Philosophy

The most successful courses I've taught, and have been taught by, have had: a clear design, an inclusive environment, opportunities for practice and relevant applications.

The design of a class is important in providing motivation for students. Through consistency and clarity, an audience has the best opportunity to understand a story and extract its lessons. In an information rich world, it's through curating information that higher education provides value, as well as including students in the academic tradition itself. I've found success in creating an inclusive environment through providing attention and patience to the individual student, and expressing my optimism and passion for the subject. When a student does feel included, they naturally develop a curiosity for the material and motivate themselves to work for a greater understanding.

Given that economics is a set of tools for problem-solving, rather than a set of facts, it is important to provide plenty of opportunities for practice. In continually setting review and challenge tasks, and providing feedback, I have found that my students not only retain more information, but are better able to critically evaluate the tools themselves. Students must also be shown how to apply the material outside of class, and that they are capable of doing this on their own. This is important in training them for professional activities, and not just academic research. In this respect, I advocate for a balance between review assessment, challenge questions, and student-led research projects, and have had a high degree of success with this balance in the courses that I've taught.

2. Experience

At the University of Pennsylvania, I've had the opportunity to design and instruct two of my own courses through the College of Liberal and Professional Studies:

- ECON 1/LPS 601 was an introductory course in microeconomics, designed to substitute for the corresponding core course in the Department of Economics. I instructed this for three semesters, which included a mid-semester pivot towards online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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In total, this involved designing a course to match the objectives of a corresponding syllabus, facilitating weekly three-hour in-person seminars, navigating new technologies and changing teaching expectations, and motivating undergraduates to study economics.

- BDS 509 was an applied game theory course for students entering a Masters in Behavioural and Decision Science. This was a new course that I built on request from the university and was for students with little experience of economics to learn how social scientists can use the tools of game theory to study strategic interactions. This involved designing a course without extensive guidelines, managing an online classroom, writing assessment to test and motivate students from diverse backgrounds and supervising student research projects.

Examples of prepared material for these courses are available on my website.

Since 2017, I've served as a teaching assistant in the Department of Economics. I've taught introductory microeconomics, introductory business economics, industrial organization, market design, and strategic reasoning. My roles have included leading recitations, writing assessment, organizing course logistics and supervising student research projects.

Between 2013 and 2016, I taught at the Research School of Economics at the Australian National University. As a tutor and teaching assistant, I taught microeconomics (I, II, III and IV honours), strategic thinking, Australian economic history and a graduate topics course in microeconomic theory. My roles included leading tutorials, designing assessment and preparing supplementary lecture material.

3. Effectiveness

The University of Pennsylvania collects student evaluations for each course and each instructor. My personal evaluations average between 3 and 4, the highest rating, under each response category. The full reports are available on request. Some highlights from the anonymous comment section include:

Nawaaz was incredibly energetic, enthusiastic, and willing to help us learn the material from our lectures with [the instructor]. He was always prepared and clearly explained the examples we had to go over. (ECON 10, 2021)

I really loved the class. It taught me something new about myself as a student and really pushed me out of my comfort zone to start asking for help during office hours. It taught me how to change and manage my study habits. Nawaaz was a fantastic teacher and tries to make sure that everyone understands the material presented and makes himself available if a student does not understand. (LPS 601, 2019)

Nawaaz was an extremely helpful TA. I had heard a lot of somewhat negative stories about TAs, especially in intro classes. I had the absolute opposite experience. Nawaaz communicated information clearly and always did his best to prepare us for quizzes and exams. He made recitation an important part of my Econ experience, rather than a mere formality at the end of each week. (ECON 1, 2018)

I've also been rewarded by seeing my students conduct fantastic pieces of original research. In my most recent course, BDS 509: Applied Game Theory, my students used the tools they acquired in class to study their own research topic in social science. Topics ranged from clientelism to deforestation, and the final projects were of very high quality. The process of guiding and learning from their output makes me particularly excited to continue to pursue this in my future teaching roles.

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