Teaching Statement and Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness

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Teaching Philosophy

In teaching economics, I believe it is more important to nurture students' understanding of broadly applicable principles than it is to have them memorize elements of a particular model or formulas for calculating a t-statistic. My goal is to have students leave my courses with a working knowledge of how to apply concepts such as conditional probability, marginal cost versus marginal benefit, or agents' response to incentives so that they can use these tools not only at school or work but in their everyday lives.

To promote this type of understanding, I strive to tailor my course structure to the subject matter, class size, and format. I been the instructor of record for a 200-student Principles of Microeconomics course and a 50-student introductory statistics course in the traditional in-person format, and for a 40-student mathematical skills course for economics majors in a hybrid format. I have also been a TA for introductory principles and statistics courses as well as senior-level applied econometrics and honors research courses, both in person and online. Teaching a broad array of courses in a variety of formats has helped me develop a sense of which tools are most effective in which courses. I am particularly enthusiastic about teaching courses related to statistics, applied econometrics, causal inference, and data analysis, as these are the skills I use most often in my own work and the skills that often provide students with the highest return in the labor market after they graduate.

Each time I prepare to teach a new course, I prioritize communicating to students the structure and expectations for the course and the concepts that will be the most important for them to retain. Barring a significant change in circumstances, students are aware of all exam dates and deadlines as well as a general sketch of the material covered each week at the start of the semester. This structure allows students to come to class prepared and to have the maximum amount of time to do their best work on all course assignments. Furthermore, I always structure course sessions such that the application of concepts is a primary focus. Rather than delivering concepts in lecture and expecting students to apply them on their own, I prioritize including several example problems or activities in every lecture that we complete together as a class. Students consistently offer feedback that these examples are the most effective way for them to learn the material, so in addition to including them in every lecture, I set aside periodic "review days" where the entire lecture consists of examples, activities or practice problems on material we have already covered. Because many economics courses build on their basic concepts throughout the semester, these review days allow students who have struggled in the beginning of the semester to catch up and students who have excelled throughout the semester to deepen their understanding of broadly applicable material. For courses that are prerequisites for other courses in the major, I spend the most time on material that students will encounter again in their future coursework. Covering supplementary material is useful to students only if they are able to retain the fundamentals.

Teaching during the pandemic highlighted the importance of effective use of technology across all formats and course levels. In my experience, students are more excited about a course and take more ownership of their own success when course materials are made available in as many formats as possible. For example, I saw higher participation in office hours than ever before when they were delivered in an online format, and even students who attended lectures in person for a hybrid course said they availed themselves of the lecture recordings when reviewing for exams. Not only are these resources helpful to all students, but they level the playing field for students

who face work or caregiving responsibilities, or whose disabilities add difficulty to traditional learning environments. Even as universities return to full in-person capabilities, I plan to continue incorporating recorded videos, virtual and hybrid office hours, and online lecture notes and assignments in all future courses to supplement traditional in-person instruction. These elements not only contribute to equity of access but establish an open line of communication with all students and prepare them for a labor market that is increasingly dependent on technology. These digital communication tools, especially an effective course website that takes advantage of useful features of the learning management system, are particularly important in large lecture courses where all 200 students are not able to personally interact with the instructor in every lecture. Even in smaller class sizes, the structure provided by these tools can aid students with staying organized and ensuring that they can see the big picture and track which concepts they are expected to master throughout the course.

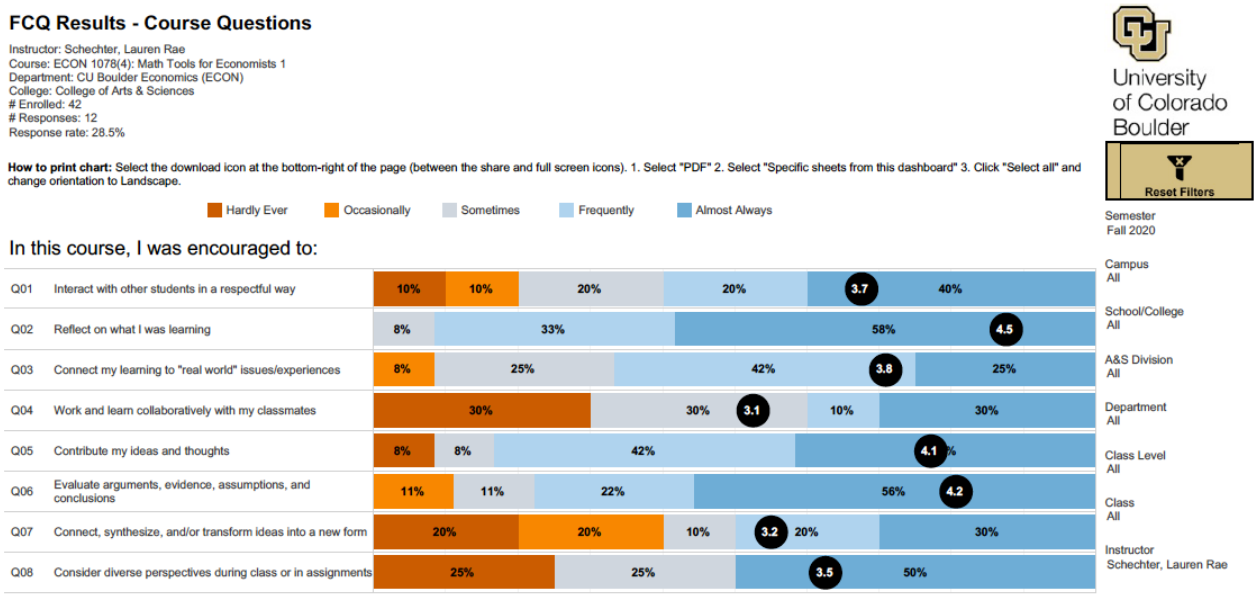
While a well-designed course structure and effective use of technology are important, I have found that students' interest in the course material is most responsive to the instructor's enthusiasm for the subject. In all courses, but especially in skills courses such as mathematical tools, statistics, or econometrics courses, I make a concerted effort to emphasize that students are not just learning boring math – they are learning tools that will help them understand and identify patterns of human behavior and economic activity. Incorporating real-world examples and applications and showing students the ways that the skills they learn in their economics coursework can enable them to answer questions about the world around them is vital to capturing their attention and helping them retain the concepts they have learned. Students state in course evaluations that their favorite lectures are those that bring in real-world examples, cutting-edge economics research, or group activities. For example, in introductory statistics courses, I include a classroom experiment in which students flip coins and collect their own data to demonstrate the normal approximation to the binomial distribution. I always reserve course time for real-world connections and active learning activities that engage students and help them connect to the material. These activities also help break down barriers and make students feel more comfortable communicating with me and with each other so that they can reach out for help if they are struggling.

Finally, I always strive to create a grading structure that treats all students fairly and equitably. Studies show that women and under-represented minority students are less likely to ask for extensions or grading policy exceptions than their white male peers, so I always design a grading policy that leaves room for error for all students rather than rewarding those more willing to ask. Rather than granting extensions to individual students, I opt to allow all students to drop one low homework grade or replace it with an extra credit assignment, and rather than offering a "grade bump" to students who email me at the end of the semester, I am steadfast in denying these requests and offering the same curve to all students. I believe it is important for instructors to be aware that their implicit biases may make them more sympathetic to some students' circumstances or explanations than others', so I build in flexibility for all students rather than offering it only to those who are willing to ask for special treatment.

Overall, I believe that my extensive teaching experience throughout graduate school has taught me how to design an effective course structure, communicate expectations to students, encourage students' interest in challenging course material, and foster equity in the classroom. In every course I teach, I prioritize the application of economic principles to students' careers and everyday lives so that they can not only retain the material but develop an enthusiasm for it. Nothing makes my day like an email from a former student telling me that what they learned in my course has served them well long after they have left my classroom.

Teaching Evaluations Summary Measures

Math Tools for Economists, Fall 2020, Hybrid Format



Intro to Statistics with Computer Applications, Spring 2019, Traditional Format