

Teaching Statement

Mauricio Arango Isaza

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I consider the economist approach to problems the most valuable asset of my profession. Therefore, in my teaching, I focus on cultivating this way of thinking in my students by presenting them with real-world situations and showing them the theoretical explanation that academic literature has provided. I then show empirical evidence of the different mechanisms at work. In this letter, I give a short description of my approach to teaching. I have developed these methods through my experience as an undergrad instructor in International Economics (econ420) and teaching assistant of Economic Statistics (econ203) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Before this, I worked as a lecturer in Macroeconomics at Universidad del Rosario in Bogota, Colombia.

I consider learning an iterative process. Every time we look into a subject, we can find something new, even if we have seen the same topic before. That is why in class, I show the specific features and common ground of different topics. This approach helps me keep a cohesive line that gives structure to the learning process and helps students keep track of the material covered. Let me give an example: if I'm teaching a new model, I explain the common ground between the new and old model, what is unique, and why the new features in the model are important in explaining different economic phenomena.

I use different tools to achieve my teaching goals. For instance, in International Economics, I motivate new topics with games designed to illustrate one principle relevant to the subject. The idea behind the game is to engage students. I then ask questions that are motivated by the material to be covered. The questions are meant to further motivate students and introduce the subject to be discussed. After the motivation, I give my lecture on the class topic. The lecture usually encompasses a summary of the empirical evidence, a theoretical model, and the limitations of the theory. The lecture material is later reinforced through assignments and a long-term class project designed to encourage students to apply the material covered in class. During the completion of the different assignments, students receive my feedback through office hours and preliminary checks before the final deadline.

As an instructor, I'm aware that many of my students don't want to stay in academia. That is why I use assignments to teach skills that can be useful in the labor market—assignments that demand data analysis and computer coding. One example is asking students to analyze some economic variables by replicating an example that I provide with new data that they collect.

The set of tools I use in my class has expanded over time, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic. For instance, after the pandemic, I started publishing short videos that explained the class topics. Most students have found those videos helpful. However, my experience with remoter learning is that not every topic is a good fit to be thought remotely. For example, the theory is best taught in person, as the student's feedback (e.g., questions and facial expressions) helps the instructor navigate the topic in the most accretive way. On the other hand, repetitive assignments where

students have to follow a set of instructions (e.g., coding and algebra assignments) are a good fit for remote learning, as students can pause and go back to parts of the material that they didn't understand.

In the past, I have taught International Economics, Economic Statistics, and Macroeconomics. I'm eager to teach classes in urban, transportation, and real estate economics. I also welcome the opportunity of teaching courses outside of these fields.

Emails from students and positive reviews

Arango Isaza, Mauricio

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, September 13, 2020 12:05 PM
To: Arango Isaza, Mauricio
Subject: ECON 420 - Quick Question

Hey Professor Arango,

Do you teach any other economics courses? I feel like the way you explain concepts really resonates with me and it would be awesome if I could take another course with you.

Arango Isaza, Mauricio

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, December 14, 2018 12:03 AM
To: Arango Isaza, Mauricio
Subject: Re: Fall 2018-ECON 420-International Economics-Section A3: exam 3

Mauricio,

Thanks for a great semester! I enjoyed taking the course and have learned a lot, and have even been having some discussions about international trade with my friends.

Arango Isaza, Mauricio

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 11:59 AM
To: Arango Isaza, Mauricio
Subject: Re: announcements

Thank you for teaching this class! Appreciate the efforts and content and hope to put it to use in the future.

Thanks,

Arango Isaza, Mauricio

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 4:37 PM
To: Arango Isaza, Mauricio
Subject: Re: Test

Hi Mauricio,

Just finished it up. Did significantly better! Thank you very much for allowing me to do this. I enjoyed your class very much. And thought you taught as well as anyone during these strange times. Thanks again and best of luck during these strange times hopefully things will get back to normal soon.