

Teaching Statement

Qichao Shi
Department of Economics
Lehigh University

“Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school.”

-- Albert Einstein

I have been teaching undergraduate courses for four years in the economics department at Lehigh University, which has afforded me excellent opportunities to develop my teaching style and philosophy. As an instructor, I focus more on four aspects of teaching: setting up effective communication with students, knowing how much students have learned, improving students' way of thinking, and teaching students how to learn independently.

I believe that effective teaching should make students curious and spark their thinking. However, many students are grade-oriented and they may pay too much attention to completing assignments and passing exams, which often prevents them from thinking analytically. To get students involved, I usually start from real-world examples that are related to their lives and end with practical questions, which helps them not only to understand the intuition behind concepts but also to apply theories to reality. When solving problems in class, I prefer to guide them step by step to answers, instead of providing them the correct answer directly. Although it takes time for students to get used to this intrinsic learning process, I think it is worthwhile as it will help them to evaluate unstructured problems in their future careers.

In total, I have taught five semesters of *Principles of Economics* courses and three semesters of *Money, Banking, and Financial Markets* courses as a teaching assistant and one summer course of *Principles of Economics* as the instructor. I have enjoyed teaching these courses, and my other teaching interests include microeconomics, game theory, econometrics, among other courses.

Teaching assistants at Lehigh University not only attend lectures, grade assignments and exams, hold office hours, but we also teach four recitation sections per week, with 18-25 students in each. The sessions vary in format, ranging from teaching new material to leading discussions and reviewing assigned problems, depending on the course and professor. As my first foray into

teaching, these sessions provided me with the opportunity to become quite comfortable with public speaking in dynamic situations, and taught me about class preparation.

Additionally, I was selected to serve as an independent lecturer teaching a summer course of *Principles of Economics*. The class has an interesting dynamic in the sense that students have a wide range of educational backgrounds, from economics majors to sociology majors to engineering majors, and from first-year to fourth-year students. I take pride in trying to strike the right balance between making the course challenging enough for some students, while at the same time keeping other students, with less invested in the class, interested. To attain the goal that students would come away from the experience with an excitement to learn more about economics, I assigned homework which emphasized thinking beyond the concepts learned in class. Also, I encouraged students to work through tough questions with their classmates prior to coming in for help. Teaching a course on my own helped me to develop a teaching style that works for me. Personally, I have found that setting a more relaxed and conversational tone in class has allowed students to feel more comfortable asking questions and involving themselves in the course.

Through all of my teaching experiences at Lehigh, I have developed a real passion for the art of teaching. I have learned to adapt my teaching style to a current classroom situation, to slow down and take an extra day to emphasize an important topic, and to get students talking and interacting even if it means doing one less example in class or assigning one less problem set. Most importantly, I have learned that the majority of my students really are willing and able to learn, to become engaged, and to excel if given the opportunity to do so.

The best part of teaching is when I see students improving their problem solving skills and learning how to think critically. Throughout my courses, students switch from being passive listeners to becoming active thinkers who can ask not only more questions but also more creative questions. I also can tell from their faces that studying has become an exploratory trip instead of a stressful task.

In closing, students liked and appreciated my teaching, as evidenced in the scores of their evaluations, especially when I taught as an independent instructor. Please find the summaries of my teaching evaluations below.

Table 1: Instructor Evaluation Summary

Selected Evaluation Questions	Principles of Economics
	Summer 2018
Overall, the instructor's teaching was effective	4.33 (4.43)
The instructor stated clearly what was expected of the students	4.67 (4.59)
The instructor knew the subject well	5.00 (4.76)
The instructor was enthusiastic about teaching	5.00 (4.68)
The instructor was helpful when students were confused	4.83 (4.55)
The instructor was available for conferences with students	4.83 (4.44)
I learned a great deal in this course	4.40 (4.41)
I would recommend this course to other students	4.60 (4.45)
Overall score of total 21 questions	4.56

Notes: There are totally 21 questions that are answered on a 5 point scale from disagree (1) to agree strongly (5). Evaluation scores are averaged, with mean college scores in parentheses.

Table 2: Selected Teaching Assistant Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation Questions	Principles of Economics			Money & Banking		
	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018
Overall, the TA's teaching was effective.	--*	--*	--*	--*	--*	3.89 (4.37)
Discussions clarified lecture material	4.17 (4.20)	4.05 (4.39)	3.87 (4.16)	4.46 (4.41)	4.36 (4.10)	4.04 (4.45)
The recitation instructor was an effective discussion leader	3.95 (4.08)	3.77 (4.19)	3.63 (4.12)	4.32 (4.29)	3.93 (4.00)	3.69 (4.24)
The recitation instructor was well prepared	4.44 (4.58)	4.48 (4.61)	4.39 (4.55)	4.75 (4.63)	4.68 (4.50)	4.65 (4.68)
The recitation instructor was able to explain the material	4.15 (4.33)	4.14 (4.41)	3.93 (4.29)	4.49 (4.42)	4.15 (4.21)	3.98 (4.44)
The recitation added to the overall value of the course	4.02 (4.11)	4.00 (4.31)	3.71 (4.11)	4.41 (4.34)	4.07 (4.07)	4.09 (4.39)
Overall score	4.14	4.09	3.91	4.49	4.24	4.09

Notes: For TA at Lehigh, there are totally 5 or 6 questions that are answered on a 5 point scale from disagree (1) to agree strongly (5). Evaluation scores are averaged across four sections for each semester, with mean college scores in parentheses.

*: Lehigh used a new online only evaluation form in 2018, so the first question was not asked in previous evaluations.