

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

In both of my roles as a Teaching Assistant and a Graduate Instructor, I have always aimed to instill in students a sense of intuition based on economic theory. Specifically, I want students to see the complementarity between mathematical models and economic intuition. This serves the purpose of preparing them for future courses, where an intuitive and mathematical understanding of broad concepts like marginal cost versus marginal benefit, opportunity cost, welfare effects of taxation, and conditional probability facilitate learning and retention of new topics in economics. Moreover, it prepares them for real life, where a strong understanding of the theory behind decision-making is invaluable in understanding how the world works.

I have been a Teaching Assistant (TA) for many courses with varying degrees of autonomy and responsibilities. In the CU-Boulder Economics Department, TA responsibilities range from being a grader to having a weekly scheduled “recitation,” or review session, of a 25-student class. When I have full control over my recitation, I make attendance mandatory – I find that requiring students to attend induces them to participate and stay engaged in the material. To make student’s time and energy feel valued, I try to prepare additional review materials which help students evaluate their own understanding of the material. I have come to understand that this kind of frequent stream of feedback is very valued by students, as it gives them good expectations on their standing in the class while motivating them to study harder, if need be. In my role as a TA, I observed that, for many students, this was their first time applying mathematical models to decision-making problems. For recitation sections, I spent a lot of time preparing plenty of directed questions to form their mental framework around economic theory. Initiating and directing these interactions with students not only builds familiarity with economics, but also encourages students to ask their own questions as each class session progresses.

I had a chance to implement these techniques, as well as my overall philosophies and objectives, as a Graduate Part-Time Instructor (GPTI) for an Intermediate Microeconomics course in Spring 2022. When I structured the course and developed the syllabus, I had to take particulars of the course into consideration; the course material delved deeper into economic concepts and included calculus-based theory. Given the small class size (about 20 students), I felt it was feasible to incorporate a lot of peer interaction and individualized attention into the course design. I made the grading criteria simple and clear, facilitating communication about expectations, while allowing me to focus on the content of the course and effective interaction during the lectures. I gave constant reminders about the expectations and grading structure for the course, including exam dates and problem set deadlines.

My main concern regarding the Intermediate Microeconomics course material was that this would be the first time many of my students used calculus in an economics class. I was constantly conscious and apprehensive of over-emphasizing the calculus and assessing students overly for their calculus background, rather than building the bridge between the math and the real-world intuition. During each lecture, therefore, I set aside sufficient time for applications. I tried to do as many example problems with the students as possible, with a lot of calculus review. I motivated a lot of the calculus-based problems with plenty of graphical representations of the decision

problem. Overall, students expressed appreciation for the calculus refresher as well as for bridging the calculus-based problems to the economics using plenty of intuition and visual examples.

I have learned a lot about how to generate interest in the course material over the years. For the most part, instructor enthusiasm is highly correlated with the overall energy and interest-level in the course. I have learned to motivate concepts, such as the consumer's utility maximization problem, with real-world examples and example from students' own decision-making problems. I have learned to diversify learning experiences by asking students to work in peer groups or giving students alternative, creative assignments. In general, preparation and "out-of-the-box" thinking can go a long way in facilitating learning goals. I am constantly learning effective ways to engage students in the course material.

New technology has also made all my teaching goals attainable. Even though the course modality has largely returned to in-person instruction since the pandemic, I continue to implement technology-based tools and solutions in my teaching that I initially adopted during COVID. For example, offering virtual office hours continues to be a great way to boost office hour participation. I began lecturing using my tablet in 2020, I have since continued to send students all the lecture notes and with my annotations in PDF format promptly after class, much to the appreciation of students who are always afraid that they've missed something during the lectures or students who have fallen behind. I ensure accessibility of all materials through a course website integrated into a learning management system (Canvas), students can glean the overall expectations and objectives of the course immediately, while being able to access detailed course materials.

Above all, I am committed to fostering an environment of respect, where all students feel safe and confident to learn in my classroom. I am aware of learning differences across various dimensions of identity, including gender, race, and disabilities. I take this into consideration when developing a grading scheme, careful to reward students for their knowledge rather than their willingness to participate, as participation is highly correlated with race and gender. I am generous regarding missed homework assignments, allowing students to drop one or two assignments/attendance grades. I also allow students to drop one of their three midterm exams. This kind of flexibility saves me the problem of adjudicating whether a student deserves leeway for a particular circumstance, and saves me the worry of involving my own biases in these kinds of decisions.

My teaching interests are varied; I enjoy most topics in microeconomics and applied econometrics. I am happy to teach fundamental courses in microeconomics, macroeconomics, and statistics. I am particularly interested in courses relating to labor and gender topics and would be happy to teach elective courses in these fields. Additionally, I am happy to teach undergraduate as well as graduate courses.