PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

October 2019
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Teaching Statement

Xiaoyang Ye

Teaching and mentoring remain as the best thing that I set the heart on being a faculty member of higher education. I am devoted to preparing future researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in higher education. To reach this goal, what I believe every good higher education instructor's goal might be, I spare no effort to equip my students with solid theoretical and empirical tools through creating an active, innovative and supportive learning environment in and out of the classroom. Particularly, in line with my research focus on diversity and equity in higher education, one of the primary reasons that I chose to pursue a career in academia is to influence minority, low-income, and other underrepresented students, and to help them actualize their potential and reach their aspirations in the field of higher education.

1 Teaching experience in higher education and public policy

Most of my teaching experience has been at graduate level with students from all social science disciplines on both the academic track (e.g., Ph.D. and M.A.) and the professional track (e.g., MPP, Ed.M., and Ed.D.). My teaching experience in the United States and China spans the full sequence of education policy analysis (theory, policy context, methods), including the economics of higher education and applied econometrics in education policy analysis.

At Michigan, as a graduate student instructor, I have taught with Stephen DesJardins the core Ph.D. educational quantitative methods class in School of Education in Fall 2016, and with Brian Jacob the core MPP quantitative methods in program evaluation class in Ford School of Public Policy in Fall 2017. In both classes, I helped develop new course materials, delivered weekly sections, assisted with grading tests and research papers, and held 20-hour office hours every week. Both courses were challenging (ranked among the most difficult courses) but were essential for students in the field of higher education and public policy research. While these courses are about teaching quantitative methods, I have made efforts to embed the learning of theory and methodology in real world policy contexts.

I take pride in my innovative teaching and heavy investment in the success of my students. My most rewarding moment as a teacher (even more rewarding than a few rounds of applause I got on the last days of both courses!) came from students' feedback and written comments, in which they told me they had learned these skills (***I provide an appendix section of selected student comments***). Many of my students appreciated the "nothing great is easy" journey and have applied the skills in their new education policy research or leadership roles. Partly because of my "excellence in graduate teaching and mentoring," I received the Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship - the University of Michigan's most prestigious honor for graduate students.

Over the past two summers, I taught three graduate courses (economics of higher education, school finance, human resources management in education) as a visiting instructor in the School of Education at Peking University. I also had intensive teaching experience in education policy and research methods during

my master's studies at Peking University. Beyond teaching, I have both formal and informal mentoring experience of thesis writing and research advising at Michigan and Peking University. In recent years, I provided numerous individualized instruction to graduate students in the field of higher education and public policy in various U.S. universities when they applied for nationally competitive research grants.

2 Courses that I am prepared to teach

I look forward to bringing my dedication to teaching to the LPO department and the Peabody College at Vanderbilt. With solid training in economics, education, and public policy, I would be interested in and qualified for teaching a broad set of **substantive courses in the field of public policy in higher education** at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, including but not limited to:

- Economics of Higher Education
- Higher Education and Public Policy
- Equity in College Access and Admissions
- College Choice and Success
- Public Finance of Higher Education
- Human Resources in Education
- International & Comparative Higher Education

I am also prepared and would like to teach courses in the **full quantitative methodological sequence** from introductory-level to advanced-level. Courses are designed to prepare future higher education policy professionals to contribute to education change, policy, and research on a local, national, and global scale. I would also be very interested in advising undergraduate and graduate (on both the academic and professional tracks) students in the Higher Education Management Program, as well as in other programs.

Given my expertise in several policy areas and research methods, I would be thrilled to develop and offer **advanced topical courses**, including behavioral economics in higher education (organizations, faculty, students), inequality and poverty in higher education, international comparative education policy, advanced quantitative methods (randomized controlled trial, frontier quasi-experimental methods), and big data in education policy). These courses can also be grouped in a full sequence of courses to understand and address the behavioral barriers facing underrepresented minority and other disadvantaged students in their pathway of college readiness, choice, and success.

3 Teaching philosophy

High expectations with high support

In teaching, I maintain high expectations but also provide high support for my students. My teaching philosophy can be summed up by a proverb, "nothing great is easy." In all of the courses I have taught I set the expectation for students to develop deep expertise in higher education analysis to address the sophisticated problems using the most rigorous quantitative methods with sound theoretical foundations. Learning the principles of quantitative methods and understanding the context and theory are not easy (nor is teaching!). I strive to provide guidance and support of the key concepts and methods while expecting that

students (are motivated to) put their efforts struggling and muddling to acquire new knowledge and skill. I always encourage and engage students to aim higher than their comfortable areas. I expect them to succeed not based on previous knowledge or experience but through active engagement and hard work.

High expectations do not mean that I expect students would suffer endlessly. I employ multiple teaching methods, demonstrate to students how to apply the course content, require students to write every week, and I integrate new technologies into the courses to help students understand the course materials. Classes and course materials are designed and delivered to help them learn in the most efficient ways. Help is always available through careful preparation and thoughtful instruction, as well as many personalized assistance approaches. I constantly improve my teaching "toolkit." For example, in my recent classes, I combined class lectures with detailed notes, which took me twice amount of preparation time, but significantly increased the effectiveness of students' learning.

Innovative teaching and inclusive learning

My classes consist of a combination of lecture, problem-solving exercises, small and larger group discussions, and the use of real-world examples to help explain complex ideas. As an education policy researcher who uses valued-added as one of the critical tools to evaluate school and teacher effectiveness, I always strive to provide value-added for all. My teaching aims that every student in my class would gain increases in both their interests and understanding education policy analysis.

While the whole-class teaching primarily focuses "at the mean," I have made tremendous efforts to tailor to the diversity in student backgrounds, abilities, motivations, and confidence levels. I adopted many of these efforts from effective pedagogical strategies and behavioral interventions in the literature. Through class surveys, meetings with prerequisite course instructors, and diagnostic quiz, I prepare personalized profiles and study plans for students, with a particular emphasis on those students in high needs. I use new technologies and data analytics to track students' learning and performance, and then provide them with timely reminders, encouragement, and support.

For students who are above the mean levels of the class, I always encourage and support them to go beyond the coursework to try to conduct high-quality research, in other words, I am trying to train the next generation of education policy researchers. I provide intensive research mentoring to these students. A few students have successfully moved their course papers to conference presentations and journal publications. Many of my students have mastered sufficient understanding of the foundational quantitative methods for their professional careers in education policy and other policy areas.

For students who are less sure of their ability to succeed, I support them by offering one-on-one tutoring in office hours (extended in evenings and weekends), online virtual office hours (to reduce students' travel time), emails, and encouraging written comments on their problem sets. For their purposes, I set the goal to train them as good consumers of education policy research. In my classroom, these approaches have been significantly facilitated with the assistance of new teaching methods and technologies (e.g., data based learning analytics, real-time feedback, research-based instruction, seminar-based group work, small and large group discussions, and online/flip classroom learning).

Empirical-minded and diversity-focused

As an empirical-minded researcher, I always combine theory, history, context, and method in both content-focused and methodology-focused classes. When teaching a specific higher education issue, I attempt to bring in the most relevant theories and methods that could address it. When teaching quantitative methods, I demonstrate to students how to best utilize the methods to answer critical questions on the foundation of contextual knowledge. Furthermore, my teaching of quantitative methods always attempts to help students move away from just being a "Stata-runner" but understand how "Stata" works.

In line with my research focus on underserved students, I understand and emphasize diversity, equity and inclusion in the classroom as well, treating students with respect. In addition to tailoring my instruction and assistance to students with different needs, I make sure that everyone feels included and valued. I use the student administrative portfolios to remember students before the new semester, and then engaged students by calling each student's name from the first class section. I continuously provide responses that help students know that their input is valuable and that I appreciate the chance to learn from them. I also encourage students to create a conductive and inclusive learning environment by sharing and working with each other, the so-called "peer effects," to complement and amplify my "teacher effects."

Beyond the classroom, I have provided formal and informal research mentoring to both undergraduate and graduate students (economics, education, public policy, political science) at the University of Michigan, especially seeking to encourage and supporting the female, minority, and first-generation students in their involvement of higher education research. I have also actively participated in pedagogy workshops to deepen my understanding of and to learn strategies to diversity, equity, and inclusion in college classrooms.

A Appendix: Selected course evaluation comments

A.1 Education 799 in Fall 2016: Categorical Dependent Variable Modeling (with Stephen DesJardins)

Course description: This course focuses on multivariate regression methods in which the dependent variable is non-continuous, as well as the application of those methods to higher education-related research questions, using a variety of higher education data and policy examples (including the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster as an example of model prediction and missing data bias). As the highest level Ph.D. level quantitative course in the the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education and also in School of Education, we have students from higher education, K-12 education, public policy, sociology, and public health.

- The lab was very useful. Xiaoyang is super knowledgeable and clearly really wants to help people understand the material. His lab materials were impressively detailed and always went a step further for students who wanted the additional challenge. He provided great Stata-based instruction and tutorials for implementing the models learned in lecture.
- GSI was enthusiastic and clearly cared about student learning. He was well prepared and thoughtful about course material. He was always willing to meet with students and it made assignments more easily completed.
- Xiaoyang is by far the best graduate student instructor I've had since attending undergraduate and graduate school here at the University of Michigan. He finds a perfect balance of not babying his students yet never relays a sense that you are a burden on him when asking questions. He truly cares if you understand the materials tries in many ways to teach this information. His knowledge and deep understanding of the material is very evident. What sets Xiaoyang a part from any other GSI or even most professors is his ability to relay the complexities of the theories in the most simplistic and profound manner. I appreciated that Xiaoyang provided all the resources including the STATA code because he put more emphasis on us learning the theory then becoming a STATA-runner. Learning the theory was more important to me than learning the codes, which I could look up at a later time. The classes cover a lot topics and Xiaoyang always did his best to accommodate students who were at different baseline levels. Xiaoyang was always available for helping out and all times throughout the week. My biggest regret in this class ending is that Xiaoyang could not move forward to be my GSI for other econometric courses.
- Thank you very much for the effort you gave to this class. It was very helpful all the time.
- Xioayang is a great teacher and truly wonderful person. I learned so much from him and he was so accessible and always willing to help.
- Xiaoyang Ye is the best GSI I've had during my time at the University of Michigan, bar none. He is knowledgeable, approachable, and puts in the work to provide students with the materials they need to understand the course content. Hire him. Hire him, again. I have no doubt Xioyang will be a great professor and researcher.

A.2 Public Policy 639 in Fall 2017: Quantitative Methods in Program Evaluation (with Brian Jacob)

Course description: This course introduces students to the use and interpretation of quantitative methods in program evaluation. The goals of the class are to train students to critically consume empirical research and to train students to thoughtfully produce their own empirical research. As the core MPP quantitative method course, it makes a particular effort to embed the learning in causal inference with real data and actual public policy problems. Topics covered include education, child and family, labor market, health, crime, environment, public finance, inequality, national security, and international development. Students are from public policy, higher education, K-12 education, psychology, public health, environmental studies, information science, and communication.

- It was great to have your help and feedback to accompany the regular class lecture. I found section very useful. I also really appreciate your constant encouragement, flexibility, and availability through email and at your office – it all helped a lot to make me feel like I could actually learn program eval!
- The instructor was entertaining and went well and beyond the call of duty for students outside of class. However, sometimes, students asked questions and struggled with material, he was got frustrated with them. This could be improved. Discussion sections could also be a little bit more focused, but the materials were always prepared. I would like to underscore how committed this instructor was to his students outside of class.
- Best GSI in Ford School so far I have
- I love Xiaoyang, and he is great in an one on one setting when you have questions. He is accommodating and helpful, and he really wants us to succeed. My only critique is that he doesn't always proceed in a linear way in section, which can make it hard to follow what he is trying to teach us.
- Xiaoyang was a great GSI. His sections were very helpful and prepared us well for our HW and our quizzes. His attitude was also very welcoming and approachable. His office hours were very useful and he would help multiple people at the same time which was also helpful so we would not have to wait for others to leave the office. My favorite GSI that I have had since being at Ford school.
- I could feel the GSI was passionate about teaching the subject! I really appreciate it!
- He was great. Best GSI ever.
- Xiaoyang has helped me understand the class and is a great GSI. He was always trying to calm me down and figure out what I don't know. His questions were able to make me think evaluation in a new way.
- I love Xiaoyang! I think with a more organized and clear professor teaching the course, Xiaoyang's section would have been a really nice compliment to the course. This section was one of the few sections that I felt like was entertaining and helpful. I wish we would have done more of the STATA work as it related to class, instead of brand new examples.
- Xiaoyang is great and always willing to help. However, I think that section was a waste of time because of my classmates. I think that Xiaoyang could have handled them better, made them not disrupt/ask

questions that were already discussed/pay attention. Students had the expectation that they could just get the answer if they whined about it, and this not only does a disservice to them, but also really disincentivized me to try to learn things on my own and work hard because I felt like my classmates took advantage of his willingness to help and didn't do their own portion of the work. I also think that unfair help was given on quizzes when people were allowed to change their answers later when Xiaoyang told them something wasn't right. That rewards peoples' entitlement to an A and really deters people from earning their own grade. However, that aside, Xiaoyang is amazing.

- Kindest GSI, truly cares about students, and puts an immense amount of effort into being available 24/7, holding so many office hours, and preparing amazing review material for us.
- Clearly a brilliant guy with creative and intuitive explanations.
- Xiaoyang really knew the course material, although sometimes I think because of this he could not answer basic questions because he was so advanced! Very helpful and responsive though, and that was really appreciated.
- Xiaoyang was the best GSI I have ever had at the Ford School. I am not saying this because I am an "A" student because I am still struggling with the material still but I am motivated to learn because of my interactions with the GSI. Xiaoyang always answered all of my questions, even if I emailed at a perhaps inconvenient time for him. He held additional office hours that were particularly helpful to me as I am taking 18 credits. I applaud you as an international student teaching the class so well and thoroughly in a language that is not your native language. You explained everything thoroughly and in a logical sequence. Your notes were more valuable to me than the lecture notes. You were always prepared for section; I appreciate the equal attention given to content review/clarification and actual application. I appreciate your attempts to keep things light-hearted when many of us were struggling to keep our grades up.
- Xiaoyang is a good teacher! You can tell that he really wants to help us all learn (and love) the material as much as he does. He came to class very prepared and the materials he presented in class were relevant to what we were learning in class. One thing that was difficult was that he sometimes explained concepts at a higher level which made it difficult to understand concepts that are already difficult for us to understand since most of us are not quant savvy. Despite difficulty explaining material in class, I found that Xiaoyang was great one on one. He definitely made time to meet with students at any time and I really appreciated that. He was also very responsive via email especially when we had assignments due. I found this very helpful. Most helpful though was the review materials he prepared for exams and quizzes. His notes helped to break down the material well and I found it helpful to read through them then go see him in office hours for more guidance.
- Great GSI who knows program evaluation methods almost too much for the purpose of this course.
- I learned more from Xiaoyang than I did from Brian.
- Xiaoyang was always very well prepared for section. Generally, I could tell that he put a lot of effort into helping us. He made countless resources available to us, made himself very available during

office hours, and seemed to care a lot about our success. He also did nice things to enliven section; for instance, he told us about his own research and shared motivational quotes/messages. To improve his teaching moving forward, I would encourage Xiaoyang to slow down a bit. Often, it felt like he moved very quickly. Using the chalkboard or writing on the screen could help with this. Similarly, while all of the resources he provided were useful, sometimes given the number of resources I wasn't sure what to use; for instance, when working with STATA, I had trouble understanding his do files. Additionally, I would encourage Xiaoyang to be more cognizant of how he responds to questions; sometimes I felt as though he dismissed my questions. Overall, I appreciate his support this semester – he was key to my success in Program Eval. He cares a lot about his students, which is awesome.

- Xiaoyang was super willing to be available to students. He did all he could to help us understand the material- although he was frustrated when we didn't get it, and that didn't help. He is a caring, compassionate teacher though, and really wants his students to learn.
- Fantastic instruction. My only suggested area of growth is answering questions in person...but very responsive over email and invested strongly in the success of his students.
- I really thought that Xiaoyang was a fantastic GSI. He was incredibly patient and available for all questions and outside of just his "normal" office hours. I thought he clearly explained all my questions...from STATA to concepts. His resources were unbelievably helpful (do-files, notes, etc.), not just for the assignments but for understanding the material on a deeper level. I know the class material could be challenging for many, but I firmly believe that if they took the time to meet with Xiaoyang they would excel. Thank you for the patience!
- I loved the gsi- the best I have had till now. He has been very understanding, and helpful.
- Xiaoyang was easily the best GSI I have had at University of Michigan, both undergrad and graduate school. He was incredibly available and responsive to students! Honestly, I always received a response within 30 minutes!
- (One of the best memories is from a student's email:) *Just wanted to take a moment to say thank you for being the coolest GSI I've had at school till now. The little things you do (like playing the inspiring music today minutes before a quiz) make a huge difference in our grad school experience. Will always remember this.*