

Teaching Statement

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Ever since I was asked the question in high school, “What do you want to do when you grow up,” my response has always been, “Teach.” My first job at the age of 16 was as a tennis instructor, and through my years until graduate school, I worked as a peer adviser, tutor, and mentor. One of the biggest reasons I decided to get a Ph.D. was so that I could become a teacher. Very few things in life truly make me feel happier than seeing someone learn. Upon entering graduate school, when I realized that I could be a teaching assistant (TA) for as many terms as I liked, I was genuinely thrilled, and I made the most of my opportunity. From Fall 2011 to the Summer of 2014, I worked as a TA for 12 different classes, ranging from Introductory Macroeconomics to Graduate-level Game Theory. I also served as an instructor for three classes from 2014 to 2016, more than any graduate student in the history of the economics department. While the primary purpose of the Ph.D. is to hone our skills in research, it has been the joys and successes of seeing my students learn that has kept me motivated through my graduate program.

My biggest test as a teacher came in the Fall of 2014. After being recognized with an award for the graduate student with the best student evaluations in 2013, the economics department asked me to teach a novel “Teaching of Economics” course. All incoming graduate students were required to take the course, which met once a week for an hour. I asked the department what the purpose of the course was, and given its fledgling stage, the response was generic: “Teach our graduate students how to be effective TAs. What makes you an effective instructor?” I soon realized that I was having a very difficult time answering this question. I always felt confident that I was an effective teacher, but I truly could not identify the mechanisms through which my teaching was effective. I pondered this question for the entire summer as I prepared the material for the course. After many hours of deep, critical thinking and looking inside myself, I finally came upon the answer to the question and, in turn, my general teaching philosophy.

I believe that the biggest key to being a successful instructor is to develop a genuine passion and interest for teaching. Now, I recognize that this amounts to saying “Those who love what they do are also typically the best at what they do,” but it is true and important. Students feed off the teacher’s energy. In my opinion, so many other decisions that go into course-preparation, such as whether to use a chalkboard or projector or slides, or whether to require attendance or post notes online, are second-order in importance. The first thing every instructor or TA should ask themselves is whether they are truly excited for the opportunity to teach. It is easy for graduate students and professors to get caught up in research,

and to simply look at teaching as a mandatory, time-consuming obligation. However, it is also easy to see the impact that teachers have on their students, and thus it does not take much to convince even a curmudgeon of an instructor about the opportunity they have to make a difference in a student's life. All of us are where we are because someone taught us.

And so, the opportunity to teach is something that I truly never take for granted. I look at each batch of students I teach as a chance to influence and inspire. With this enthusiasm and appreciation, students will always welcome and acknowledge their instructor, irrespective of the mode with which the course was taught. The success of this philosophy is reflected in a variety of measures in my student evaluations, but the one that I am proudest of is the following: With a total of 614 student evaluations as a TA and as an instructor, 602 either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" that I was overall an effective instructor; the remaining 12 marked "Neutral". The next page contains a summary table of my student evaluations. A full list of unedited student comments can be found on my website:

<http://lrlusher.weebly.com/teaching.html>

With regard to teaching interests, I am very willing and open to teaching any undergraduate economics course. I feel confident in my ability to teach an effective undergraduate economics course for any topic, even if I have never served as a TA or instructor for the topic in the past; I would simply need to spend more time learning the material. If I was provided a choice, I would gravitate toward classes that overlap with my research fields, so Microeconomics, Public Economics, Labor Economics, Economics of Education, Behavioral Economics, Econometrics, and Experimental Economics. I have also deeply enjoyed teaching Game Theory, and I feel that I am capable of teaching Game Theory at a graduate-level.

Student Evaluation Statistics:

Year	2011				2012				2013				2014			
Quarter	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer Session	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer Session	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer Session	Fall			
Course ID	ECN 1B	ECN 1B	ECN 1B	ECN 1B	ECN 160B	ECN 125	ECN 200C	ECN 1B	ECN 122	ECN 151B	ECN 200C	ECN 102	ECN 397			
Course title	Principles of Macroeconomics	Principles of Macroeconomics	Principles of Macroeconomics	Principles of Macroeconomics	International Microeconomics	Energy Economics	Graduate Microeconomic Theory	Principles of Macroeconomics	Game Theory	Labor Economics	Graduate Microeconomic Theory	Introductory Econometrics	Teaching of Economics			
Enrollment	116	---	119	73	67	75	25	74	74	36	37	59	36			
% responding	63%	---	37%	59%	64%	87%	136%	59%	70%	81%	97%	68%	81%			
Response to individual questions (% agree)																
1. The TA presents material in a clear and organized manner.	99%	100%	100%	98%	100%	98%	100%	93%	100%	100%	100%	98%	88%			
2. The TA speaks audibly and communicates effectively.	97%	100%	98%	98%	98%	98%	100%	93%	100%	100%	100%	100%	88%			
3. The TA stimulates discussion in sections.	86%	98%	95%	98%	84%	95%	100%	86%	90%	97%	94%	93%	88%			
4. The TA is responsive to questions.	99%	100%	100%	100%	93%	98%	100%	91%	96%	100%	97%	90%	88%			
5. The TA is punctual for sections and office hours.	100%	100%	100%	98%	93%	98%	100%	90%	96%	100%	100%	98%	88%			
6. The TA is available and helpful to students during office hours.	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%	100%	100%	88%	94%	100%	100%	92%	86%			
7. The TA is responsive to difficulties students have in understanding the material.	97%	100%	100%	98%	97%	98%	100%	88%	90%	97%	97%	98%	87%			
8. The grading was fair and timely.	75%	98%	98%	95%	93%	94%	100%	90%	92%	93%	97%	85%	85%			
9. The discussion section was a very good educational experience.	97%	100%	100%	98%	95%	94%	100%	86%	94%	100%	86%	93%	71%			
10. Overall, the TA did a good job in this course.	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	93%	96%	100%	95%	98%	88%			
Evaluation based on question # 9 (out of 5)	4.7	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.5	4.8	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.4			
Evaluation based on question # 10 (out of 5)	4.8	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.8	4.9	5.0	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.7	4.8	4.8			

Student Evaluation Statistics:

Year	2015
Quarter	Summer Session
Course ID	ECN 122
Course title	Game Theory
Enrollment	72
% responding	61%
Response to individual questions (% agree)	
1. Clarity and organization of instructor's presentation.	98%
2. Instructional value of course assignments, such as problem sets and term papers	95%
3. Instructor's availability and helpfulness during office hours.	100%
4. Instructor's responsiveness to difficulties students having in understanding the material.	98%
5. Extent to which examinations were a fairly chosen sample of the course material.	91%
6. Fairness and timeliness of grading.	98%
7. Extent to which the number of units for this class were appropriate	98%
8. Intellectual challenge of this course.	100%
9. Extent to which the course has stimulated your interest in the subject matter.	98%
10. Overall evaluation of the instructor's teaching.	100%
11. Please indicate the overall teaching effectiveness of the instructor.	98%
12. Please indicate the overall educational value of the course.	100%

Note: Though I was the instructor for ECN 397, the survey of questions that were distributed to students were the ones reserved for TAs, and so those statistics appear in the first table. I served as an instructor in the Summer Session 2016 for an Economics of Education (ECN 152) course, but evaluations from this course have not yet processed.