

Teaching Statement

Over the past 4 years, as a teaching assistant, I have enjoyed teaching both lower and upper division undergraduate economics courses. As of summer 2022, I have taught 12 quarters and 5 summer sessions, with my discussion section sizes ranging from approximately 12 to 70. I have previously taught basic economics, probability and statistics, intermediate microeconomics and managerial economics, and I am interested in teaching broad microeconomics and applied econometrics based courses. Although most of my teaching experience has been in-person, over the last couple of years, I have held discussion sections for multiple courses remotely as well.

I have also been fortunate to have received two fellowships from the UCI Department of Teaching Excellence and Innovation (DTEI): Summer Fellowship and the Summer Teaching Apprenticeship Program (STAP) Fellowship in the summers of 2020 and 2022 respectively. The programs introduced me to pedagogical intricacies emphasizing on virtual teaching and active learning techniques.

While teaching, I focus on making sure that students learn how to connect the knowledge in the class to their everyday lives. I find that interspersing the theory and formulations with examples and applications helps students grasp the relevance of topics better. Finally, I prioritize students' understanding of economic optimization so that they can appreciate how economics makes them better decision-makers in general.

Teaching Experience

As a teaching assistant, I have led weekly discussion sections for 7 terms of managerial economics, 3 terms of intermediate microeconomics and 1 quarter each of basic economics and probability and statistics. Apart from in-person teaching, over the pandemic, I have also taught 4 quarters virtually over Canvas, Yuja and Zoom.

As part of my teaching assistant-ship, I have also held weekly office hours for students to get one-on-one support on course material. Some of my most memorable teaching experiences come from these personal interactions I have had with students and it has made me greatly value the importance of building individual relations with students in order to understand their learning needs better. Working together with students in this inter-personal space, to help them develop a deeper understanding of ideas or concepts has also made me realize how rewarding teaching is for me.

DTEI Fellowship Training

- As a DTEI Summer Fellow, I provided instructional support to undergraduate and graduate level instructors in pedagogical training dedicated to online teaching. This involved creating Canvas space for teaching modules, assignments, exams, and using Zoom to teach virtually in a manner that most closely replicates in-person student-teacher interaction. I also supported four courses as they were converted to a remote format using educational software.
- As a STAP Fellow, I was engaged in faculty mentor meetings, asynchronous and synchronous training sessions on preparing student writing outcomes and assessments, and implementing active learning techniques in the classroom. This involved learning how to sequence and choose instructional methods and determine assessments. I also completed a course syllabus draft (available in my website) and set up a course webpage as instructor for a basic economics course.

Teaching Philosophy & Student Comments

When teaching, I try to ensure that students engage in substantial back-and-forth in the classroom and participate in quick assessments that help evaluate their progress in understanding topics.

When introducing students to new models, methods, or broad concepts, I make sure that I pause amply and repeat ideas via multiple approaches. I try to ensure that the basic foundation of the topic is clear to students before I move on to ideas that branch from the preceding groundwork. I have found that the clarification pauses let the idea sink in through slow dissemination. I also often ask students "What is difficult to grasp about

this new concept? What is clearest?" Once I am aware of the muddy points, I try to explain them further by building on the points most clear to the students. These techniques helped me explain concepts to students clearly, earning me the following comments on teaching:

"Sayantani helped me understand the material presented in lecture with examples and detailed explanations of any unclear concepts."

"(She is) Good at simplifying concepts and making content easy to understand."

"(She is) Really good at explaining concepts and showing examples."

I have found that students retain more knowledge when they can relate the information from the text to their own lives better. For instance, when discussing how the Government can impact market outcomes, I like to encourage students to engage in cooperative group discussions in the classroom. I usually introduce the topic with some contemporary public policy and then moderate group discussions where students talk about their opinions regarding the issue. This activity improves their current understanding and helps them brainstorm through relatively non-traditional approaches to the topic.

In case the class is too large or not conducive to group discussion, I substitute the group discussions with a brief query asking "How much and what do you already know about this topic?" The answers help me evaluate the pre-existing information students have, letting me then expand on them further so that they can better connect the textbook knowledge to real life applications. Students appreciate this method as shown in the following comment I received:

"(She is) Very well prepared with the materials, everything she taught in discussion was very clear, included a lot of practice examples that weren't even shown on lectures"

"I think the strongest point was she was able to draw connections between the textbook and the lecture material... She was very informative and made going to discussion sections worthwhile."

Students also find that information classified in simple charts or figures are more engaging than those in the form of plain text. I hence try to incorporate colour-coded graphs and figures into my teaching as and when applicable. This method works particularly well when the discussion involves comparing between multiple concepts of similar nature but with key differences. For instance, when discussing how to recognize and differentiate between characteristics of varied market structures, I involve students in exercises that list the important characteristics of each structure under different groups. These exercises are sometimes as simple as asking students a brief question and allowing them to immediately respond, saying "yes" or "no" using hand-signals. Students appreciate the collaborative nature and illustration-based format of this technique as seen in the comments below.

"I thought the strongest points in your notes had to do with the organization, whether it was because of the color coordination or the charts you created, everything was really easy to follow."

"Sayantani presented the material well and in an organized fashion to the class. She always presented the material in depth and fully explained the reasoning and calculations behind the problems"

I have noticed that students' interest tend to lack when there's too much information for them to follow. I believe it's important for teachers to understand that they appreciate information being readily available in a compact format within a manageable time-frame. So, along with emphasizing students' understanding of topics, I also try to make sure that the knowledge doesn't overload them and the duration of teaching doesn't exceed their attention-span. The following comments show my ability to compactly convey teaching material.

"The strong points were that she was able to cover all the topics of that week's chapter in such a short amount of time while also having enough time to answer any questions we have."

*"Sayantani is great, she knows what she is teaching very very well. She prepares for discussion and has things orderly ready for us to get in, get help with the material as much as possible, and get out in 50 minutes.
Amazing TA"*