

TEACHING STATEMENT

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At Dartmouth, I teach development economics (ECON24) and statistics (ECON10), and mentor undergraduate research assistants through the college's Presidential Scholars program. During graduate school, I co-lectured core public policy courses, convened graduate econometrics seminars, and tutored master's courses in international macroeconomics and cost-benefit analysis.

My highest priority as a teacher is creating an exciting and inclusive learning environment. I convey my own passion and enthusiasm in every class and consultation, with carefully selected course materials and practical examples from current affairs, the latest research (including my own), and my own personal experiences. I use "universal design" principles to deal with what is often one of the most challenging aspects of teaching, student heterogeneity, by allowing students of different abilities, learning styles, and personal circumstances to participate to their fullest.

My development economics course illustrates my teaching approach well. My course outline and schedule are complete before the first class, grounding the path forward. All readings, lectures, and workshops map to assessments. All assessments map to learning objectives. I spread assessment over the course to encourage ongoing participation, increase knowledge retention, and give students the opportunity to respond to feedback. I use low-stakes formative assessments to bring the class to life (e.g., pass-fail student explanations of key concepts and readings), keep students engaged (e.g., daily online quizzes), and foster collaboration and knowledge spillovers amongst the students (e.g., problem sets and the choice of working in groups on assignments). Low-stakes assessments prepare students for higher-stakes assessments and help shyer students participate—achieving more equitable class discussions. Two grading schemes offer flexibility for students who prefer high stakes assessments and for when participation is obstructed (e.g., by sport, illness, or personal circumstances).

I like to experiment to improve my classes. Two examples which have worked well are policy briefs and course reading presentations. My policy briefs require students to respond to a big picture question—for example, why is there such little research into diseases that are endemic in developing countries, and how can we encourage this research?—in a clear and concise one-page memo. By encouraging a slightly different type of learning, I engage students who might not be as excited about pushing through problem sets. Students discuss their responses in class policy debates. In a course like development economics, this approach helps students see how the different pieces of each unit—different topics, and different theories and empirical studies within each topic—all fit together. These assignments also force students to triage information and focus on the most important issues, while pushing their writing to a new level of professional clarity, concision, and brevity.

I introduced course reading presentations as new participation-based assessment in my second teaching quarter, in response to positive feedback on the policy debates. Students sign up to present an empirical paper: summarizing the question, contribution, research design, and finding. Another student signs up to be the discussant for that paper. By forcing students to engage deeply with at least two of the course readings, these presentations help my students—some of whom have not taken econometrics—critically consume research throughout the course and better prepare for problem sets and exams.

I am a friendly and approachable person by nature, but students particularly appreciate my availability and dedication to their success. For students in the lower end of the distribution, I offer additional remedial materials, learning strategies, and support. I provide optional advanced readings for stronger students, and guide them into our Dartmouth Economics Research Scholars program (designed to nurture undergraduates interested in research), research assistantships (e.g., at the World Bank and with colleagues), and leading graduate programs (e.g., University of Chicago and the University of Oxford).

I am constantly working to improve my teaching. To prepare myself for the high-quality teaching expected at Dartmouth, I completed the Course Design Institute at the Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning to familiarize myself with best practice pedagogy and college instruction. I also took part in a faculty voice group in the Fall 2016 quarter run by a former Broadway actor in the Department of Theatre, which was thoroughly enjoyable and helpful for thinking about stage presence. Each quarter, I informally ask students what works well and what can improve, and use anonymous surveys in the first class and half way through the course to adjust my approach. At the end of each course, I note what worked best and what can improve. I use these notes and comments in evaluations to improve future offerings.

My overall course evaluations for my two Development Economics sections in Fall 2017 were Good (2.6) and Very Good (2.4), where 1 is Excellent, 3 is Good, and 5 is Poor. In Winter 2018, students rated my sections Very Good (2) and Very Good (1.8), above the Department average.

Last updated: September 29, 2018