

Teaching Statement

Siqiang Yang

University of Pittsburgh

Teaching Experience

My years of graduate study not only trained me toward a good researcher but also made me realize my enthusiasm and potential in becoming a good teacher. During the past five years, I taught two international economics courses as an instructor and served as a teaching assistant in four macroeconomics courses. From this experience, I have gradually developed my teaching style and philosophy, which can be applied to many different economic classes in the future, not necessarily in the field of international economics and macroeconomics.

Teaching Philosophy

One of my primary goals is to make sure that students truly understand the materials and learn how to think rigorously about them. Based on my experience, most students can easily understand the basic intuition behind certain decisions and causal relationships. However, they are satisfied with this level of understanding without further thinking about why it is true and whether it is always true. For example, a typical question in teaching macroeconomics would be how a higher wage rate will affect a worker's labor supply. Many students can answer quickly that higher wage rate will increase the labor supply. That means they understand the positive substitution effect that higher wage rate can increase the opportunity cost of leisure, which incentivizes more labor supply. However, students tend to ignore the negative income effect that higher wage rate can also increase earnings, which leads to higher demand for leisure, and less labor supply. Since there can be many tradeoffs behind a single economic decision, I believe it is important for students to keep this in mind when thinking about economic issues.

My teaching style prioritizes quality more than quantity. In the fertility choice literature, there is a famous quantity-quality tradeoff. Similarly, when comes to choosing the teaching materials, one can choose to teach more materials or teach fewer materials but deeper. Given limited class time, sometimes when I am trying to cover more materials, it becomes a telling of the facts to the students without helping them understand. I prefer to teach more about the basic methodology so that if students are interested in related questions, they can apply the method to learn by themselves. To better implement this teaching style, at the beginning of each class, I go through the key concepts and methods that students learned in the last class to reinforce their learning. To enhance their understanding, I will give them a big question for homework with many breakdown questions to make sure they know how to solve the problem step by step.

Last, I realized that effective teaching is not only about the interactions between teacher and students, but also about interactions within students. Specifically, I used the strategy called Think-Pair-Share on my lectures. I will provide certain information to the students, and ask them to

discuss questions in a pair, and then letting them share their opinions to the rest of the class. In this way, students can practice on how to organize their economic reasoning, and they will also be more confident about their answers after discussion. Therefore, they focus more attention on the class and participate more in the discussions.

To summarize, all these three points turn out to be very effective in my teaching experience, and I believe I can apply it further to teach many different classes in the future.

Selected Student Comments

- “He gave comprehensive materials with detailed examples and straightforward correlations that was easy to understand. I also liked that he never went on too long explaining one thing.”
- “He really put in the required time and effort to be a good TA. I loved that he solved the questions out on the board step by step exactly as we would on an exam, great practice!”
- “He was very straightforward and efficient in clarifying concepts and going through problems.”
- “Siqiang was very well-prepared for recitations and was extremely helpful in understanding the material.”
- “He really spends his time going over the concepts from class and ironing them out for me to understand them better also with great examples.”
- “Tons of examples that almost always ended up on the test. Showed how to work through every problem, not just the answer.”
- “Challenging coursework with a lot of interesting concepts.”