

# Teaching Statement

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When I started my first job as a Teaching Assistant for Graduate Econometrics in my alma mater in Berlin, I was well aware that the duties of instructors and assistants could not be confined to inculcate notions in the minds of students. Over the course of the years – despite changing teaching style, having to manage my own courses and so on – I have never doubted that the fundamental role of somebody holding a teaching position is first and foremost to foster critical thinking, argument development, verbal and written expression and the application of general principles to novel settings. These goals are especially relevant in a field – such as Macroeconomics – where versatility is a necessary condition.

Of course, the main goal of a teacher ought to be to foster the acquisition of a base of concepts and learning skills, before encouraging further learning and thinking. Methodologically, I am a strong believer that most of the learning takes place in class, together with teachers and, most important, other students. I do not deny that reading and personal elaboration of course contents is always needed after class, but I also believe that learning is fundamentally a collective process. In class, I am never satisfied when I realize that someone is lagging behind. I tend to take very seriously the somehow trivial and overused sentence ‘*there are no stupid questions*’. Accordingly, I always encourage students to question what I am explaining, to take a position, to be provocative and challenge the views on economic theory and policy that I present to them during our meetings.

I do not know if my ideas have enough dignity to be labelled as a ‘teaching philosophy’ - probably not - but I am definitely a strong supporter of a dialectical, maieutic approach to teaching and learning. This is probably an intended result of my education at The New School for Social Research, which has trained me as a *radical* economist in the etymological sense of the word, that is *to go at the root*. Therefore, my main teaching goal is always to have students engaged with the course materials, rigorously understanding them as a prerequisite for the criticism of economic theory and its implications. I believe that students should always be allowed to question everything and at the same time to choose a side in a debate, controversy, etc. In other words, students should always be partisan, never indifferent or – worse – acritical adherent to the theories and ideas presented by the teacher. Undoubtedly, online teaching makes this collective process of learning and development of a critical position slightly more complicated, but not at all impossible. While, on one hand, it is more difficult to establish a direct connection with students, they often feel more free to express themselves in front of a webcam rather than in a classroom, on the other. Overall, my experience in the rapid transition to online teaching during the Spring 2020 semester was satisfying and, apparently, so was for students.

Often, I find the most effective method of teaching is writing equations, models and flow charts on the board and explaining them to the class. My main worry when transitioning to online teaching was that I would have been unable to continue using my already tested teaching methods. However, I found a powerful ally in my active pen; using it on my personal computer has become a great replacement for chalk and blackboard!

Regarding student evaluation and assessment, I am strongly in favour of written exams. In particular, I believe that midterm examinations are particularly needed to assess the efforts made by students in acquiring notions and concepts during the course of the semester. At the same time, the final exam is the best way – I believe – both to test the knowledge acquired by students and to assess their critical understanding of the course contents. In general, for my own courses I tend to attribute greater importance to the final exam and to class participation, rather than to the midterm exam and (eventual) assignments. I believe that this way to evaluate and assess students could be maintained while transitioning to online learning.

In addition to making changes in response to student progress towards course goals and student feedback, I continually refine my teaching techniques by seeking informal consultation with experienced colleagues. As a result, I feel that I am improving and evolving as a teaching assistant and lecturer. I think it is extremely important for anyone holding a teaching position to find additional ways to grow as an instructor, thus preventing his/her teaching from getting stale. I will continue to look for opportunities to create new courses, and to fine-tune and update my current courses by incorporating innovative teaching techniques and presenting students the most up-to-date research and theories.

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