

# Teaching Philosophy Statement

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For the past six academic years, I have been teaching Economics courses at all undergraduate levels. Specifically, I have experience in *Introduction to Micro/Macroeconomics*, *Micro and Macroeconomic Theory*, *Probability & Statistical Inference*, and *Applied Econometrics* courses. Teaching is the most rewarding part of my job, and I strive to empower students through analyzing real-world phenomena, exercising critical thinking, and developing intuition about the diverse economic and statistical theories our science is built upon. In this statement, I briefly reflect on my pedagogical approach, as well as on some meaningful classroom experiences I have collected over the years at the University of Utah and Skidmore College.

My teaching approach focuses on bridging an acute gap I observe in Economics, namely that between the abstract character of our theories and their concrete, real-life applications. In my classes, students combine the unique conceptual tools offered by Economics with the necessary empirical knowledge to critically analyze reality, thus determining to what extent the theories we teach are applicable to real-world phenomena. Not only does this approach allow for a healthy feedback between my research (focused on empirical methods) and my teaching practices, but it also reinforces to students the necessity of making informed decisions, based on solid theoretical and empirical foundations.

From all classroom experiences, I have learned that only a student-centered teaching process allows them to comfortably navigate the content and expand their reasoning to the world outside the classroom. And this process usually takes off from building a consistent relationship between them and an economist's main analytical tools: (i) mathematical models, (ii) visual techniques, and (iii) critical writing/in-class discussions. I notice that students feel extremely excited to learn more about analyzing real-world events and data, but are usually intimidated by the necessary mathematical and statistical tools that make these analyses possible. Thus, one of my goals throughout the term is to have students rethink their own relations with quantitative reasoning, emphasizing that variables, equations, and models are means—and not the end itself—to translate theories and ideas into palatable results.

My current experience at a liberal arts college has been widening my pedagogical horizons. I constantly try to incorporate Skidmore's "*creative thought matters*" philosophy into my daily practices. For instance, my introductory course on Macroeconomics, whose audience usually includes undeclared first- and second-year students with diverse backgrounds, has the overarching goal of allowing them to intelligently read and critically interpret news articles, official reports, and policy proposals involving macroeconomic variables. I focus on small projects throughout the semester, with the final one stimulating students to analyze the macroeconomic variable(s) and country(ies) they are most interested in, and results are always inspiring. Students' format choices range from podcasts and screen recordings to storytelling and written essays. One worth-mentioning project was done by a group of students who, in order to illustrate their podcast discussion, made use of one of the college facilities to produce a 3-D print of two charts displaying oil consumption in the United States and its trade with the foreign sector. By wrapping the semester up with them coupling individual interests and the presentation format they feel most comfortable with, the entire semester experience feels richer for me and for the whole classroom community.

As a second illustration of my teaching practices, my Fall 2023 *Macroeconomic Theory* students are maintaining a [blog](#). This recurring assignment has the primary goal of making them comfortable in sharing their ideas and impressions about current macroeconomic phenomena. All editorial and scheduling tasks are managed by them, providing an opportunity to develop organizational skills that go beyond the programmed class content. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to combine the content studied in class with events that are currently happening through constant critical writing. As a result, not only does this activity help us for better in-class discussions, but it also provides a more meaningful experience in how macroeconomic events impact society.

A final example comes from my experience in teaching Statistics and Econometrics. I train students not to restrict themselves only to cutoff quantities—such as p-values, statistical test results, and selection criteria—for decision-making. Rejecting or not rejecting hypotheses must be accompanied by knowing how these techniques are designed, and by developing the necessary intuition behind what statistical outputs show. This way, students make their decisions in an informed way, without losing sight of critically analyzing the issues at hand. And, in the same way I do in introductory courses, I include project-based evaluations, allowing students to broadly explore their favorite topics within the discipline and apply the skills acquired over the entire semester. Projects have ranged from the use of concentrated animal feeding operations in Latin America, to testing Modern Monetary Theory hypotheses, and the existence of race discrimination in the Major League Baseball, among others.

The experiences above emphasize my views on combining theoretical concepts with real-world applications, leaving ample space for students to creatively explore topics they are particularly interested in within the courses' major subject. These areas are intentionally integrated in order to make students feel comfortable and inspired in their learning journey. Given this, I am most excited about staying in a liberal arts environment, as it allows for a greater support system for students and faculty, and whose classrooms are diverse, inclusive, and transforming settings.

Finally, a last point on my teaching approach regards transparency and reproducibility. Over the years, I have been benefiting from a diverse online community of educators within the Social Sciences. Several of them make their syllabi, lecture notes, and evaluation methods fully available online for students and other instructors.<sup>1</sup> Since Spring 2022, I have been doing the same, by making all teaching materials available on my [Github](#) profile. All lecture contents, source code, assignments, and other materials are fully available in order to maintain a transparent relationship with students, and to help other instructors in setting up their own course materials. Knowledge is a public good, and it should be made accessible to audiences beyond the current classroom community.

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<sup>1</sup>Some examples are [Andrew Heiss](#) (Political Science), [Edward Rubin](#) (Economics), [Grant McDermott](#) (Economics), [Mine Çetinkaya-Rundel](#) (Statistics), [Richard McElreath](#) (Anthropology), and [Steven Miller](#) (Political Science), among others.