

Teaching Statement

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Teaching became a passion for me before my academic career started as a graduate student in economics. When I was an undergraduate student, I believed that if I can teach in an effective way that everyone can understand, then I am knowledgeable enough to be successful in a course. At a really early stage of academic career, I started tutoring my peers and I was really enjoying the process of observing them succeed. The positive feedback that I got from my peers lead me to a path where I taught economics either as a teaching assistant or an adjunct professor in multiple universities.

I believe that effective teaching should ignite the imagination of students while making them curious about the subject. Many of the students come to classroom with the pressure of grades, which often prevents them to think critically about the subject. My main objective as a professor is to make students more productive and less grade-oriented by appreciating all of their efforts. I try to spark the interest of students by providing lot of real-world examples and asking them questions that they can relate to. This not only makes the class more engaging, but also helps students understand the intuition behind concepts. Throughout the years, I observed that less memorization and more intuition make the class a better experience for students. More importantly, this approach allows students to apply these concepts later in their careers rather than forgetting what is being memorized.

Students are often heterogeneous with respect to learning skills. I always try to identify and reach out to students who fall behind or do not feel comfortable about the class. I have seen that, in most cases, even a little help improves the performance significantly. Thus, I always hold extra office hours to those who need help. This approach allows students to gain more confidence and devote more time on learning the material. I also use problem sets and quizzes as a tool to evaluate the performance of a student before it is too late to intervene. I found my approach to be effective as I was one the two recipients of the *Teaching Assistant of the Year Award*, an award nominated by undergraduate students, in 2017 at Lehigh University, PA. I also received an honorable mention for the same award in 2016.

Over the past few years, I taught eight semesters of *Principles of Economics* class, including *Principles of Microeconomics* and *Principles of Macroeconomics*, as a

teaching assistant at Bilkent University, Turkey, University of New Hampshire, and Lehigh University. I also taught *Money, Banking, and Financial Markets* for a semester at Lehigh University. In these classes, my responsibilities included, but not limited to, covering the assigned chapters (or problem sets) and holding office hours every week. I also contributed to the grading of homework assignments, quizzes, and exams.

At Lehigh University, I was selected two times from the Department of Economics to teach *Selected Topics in Economics* independently for the Summer Scholars Institute. This program runs 3 weeks over the summer for selected high school graduates who are starting as a freshmen at Lehigh University. I really enjoyed teaching this course because these students were exposed to college life and academic courses before the semester starts and they showed a passion to have a head start. Moreover, I was fortunate to teach an online *Principles of Economics* class as an adjunct professor. This was rather a different but fascinating experience since I learned new technologies regarding distance education and how to effectively communicate online. Finally, I am scheduled to teach *Applied Microeconomic Analysis* in the Fall 2017 and Spring 2018. I am looking forward to teaching a semester-long class. Please find the evaluation summary and selected comments below.

Table 1: Teaching Assistant Evaluation Summary

Evaluation Question	Principles of Economics				Money & Banking
	Fall 2014	Spring 2015	Fall 2015	Spring 2017	Spring 2016
Discussions clarified the lecture material	4.21 (4.06)	4.45 (4.19)	4.82 (4.23)	4.94 (4.47)	4.53 (4.35)
The recitation instructor was an effective discussion leader	4.29 (3.77)	4.40 (3.98)	4.90 (3.99)	4.92 (4.47)	4.51 (4.16)
The recitation instructor was well prepared	4.75 (4.45)	4.79 (4.46)	4.94 (4.62)	4.95 (4.75)	4.83 (4.62)
The recitation instructor was able to explain the material	4.45 (3.99)	4.65 (4.23)	4.87 (4.28)	4.91 (4.57)	4.63 (4.39)
The recitation added to the overall value of the course	4.15 (3.81)	4.53 (4.07)	4.82 (4.11)	4.93 (4.51)	4.39 (4.26)

Notes: This evaluation summary is for the courses taught at Lehigh University. Questions are answered on a 5 point scale from disagree strongly (1) to agree strongly (5). Evaluation scores are averaged across 4 sections. Mean department scores are given in parentheses.

Selected Student Comments

“Erkmen was a fantastic TA. He went out of his way to give us extra review materials that he prepared and arranged himself to help us study for exams. I went to his office hours frequently since he was very thorough at explaining concepts and graphs, and clarifying my confusion. Not only was he extremely knowledgeable about the subject but he was a great teacher as well.”

“Erkmen was amazing! Always so enthusiastic to teach and very knowledgeable. Very helpful and approachable.”

“Erkmen is by far the best Eco 001 TA. He is always well prepared for class and always explains the material in a way that I can clearly understand.”

“Erkmen was a very knowledgeable TA that, I could tell, genuinely cared about our success in the course. I definitely learned a lot by attending the recitation.”

“I loved Erkmen. He was a great teacher and a great guy who was always prepared. His teaching style is very effective and in my opinion his recitations really helped me in this course. Also has a sense of humor at the appropriate times.”

“Erkmen was by far the best TA I have had at Lehigh. He seems like he genuinely wants us to exceed and clearly puts in a lot of preparation into his class. This is the only recitation section I have ever found helpful at Lehigh. I could not have scored as highly without his help.”