Teaching Statement

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1 Introduction

"As you'll recall from intermediate micro..." There is no good ending to this sentence. Yet it is a refrain deployed time and again throughout grad school, usually when the speaker intends to absolve themselves of explaining something hard.

I did not take intermediate micro. Or anything beyond Econ 102. I was a communications major.

Hence I've spent many a moment in panicked confusion trying to haphazardly recover the essential truths I was assumed to have long ago internalized. Eventually those moments added up to a Ph.D. But the experience of ignorance remains visceral.

It's hard to pinpoint the moment things starting clicking, but one big one was my first time teaching undergrad econometrics, in 2017. It was, coincidentally, also the first time I *took* undergrad econometrics. The experience was transformative. I expected to like teaching, but I did not appreciate how much I myself would learn. Ideas that I had struggled for years with suddenly made sense when I had to explain them to others. It was deeply gratifying to watch my students learn and grow—and to learn and grow alongside them.

2 Teaching Philosophy

My approach to teaching proceeds from three assumptions: (1) learning is fun, (2) anyone can learn, and (3) often it's hard. I expect myself and my students to work hard, and I explicitly reward effort. To make motivation easier, I provide many incentives: frequent problem sets, several larger projects, and regular exams require students to consistently hone their skills. My assignments are designed to be thoughtful and practical, with questions that prioritize conceptual understanding and build generalizable skills. A steady workload minimizes lapses in intellectual fitness and delivers fair sample sizes for grading.

But I also know that the best learning is the product of passion, and thus I strive to make the material relatable, relevant, and amusing. I've found that this is best accomplished by

being empathetic and approachable. Not long ago, I was in their shoes, and so I teach as I would like to be taught. If I do my job well, my students will comprehend, not memorize. I inculcate understanding the same way I approach my own study: by being logical and comprehensive. I order topics to create a natural flow, each lesson building on the previous, easing the difficulty level with a sensible progression. I emphasize context so that students appreciate where new ideas fit with what they know and what's to come. I highlight derivation to exploit the clarifying focus that origin imparts. And, as an empiricist, I emphasize applications. I use these examples not only to invigorate concepts, but also as important ends in themselves: specific instances of abstract methods that hold general insights about human behavior.

Most of my students will go pro in something other than academic research. If they learn to reason as economists, gain comfort with data and statistics, and begin to apply the scientific method to everyday life, I will consider it a job well done.

3   Teaching Experience and Outlook

I have twice taught undergraduate econometrics at Rutgers University. Students tend to approach this course with a mixture of fear and apathy. I set out to prove them wrong. My evaluations suggest I've been successful; in the words of one student, "this is the best course I have taken in my economics major so far." In addition, I served as teaching assistant for four years at Rutgers across a variety of courses, ranging from economic history to applied micro. This mix has helped me appreciate what students enjoy and where they struggle.

My teaching is also informed by my considerable "real-world" experience in government and public policy. From 2007–2012, I worked at the New York City Office of Management and Budget, where I helped steward the City's social services and criminal justice agencies through a period of fiscal distress. From 2013–2015, I analyzed and wrote about poverty and inequality for The Century Foundation, an independent think tank that endeavors to improve people's lives. These experiences, and others like them—for example, I remain a research fellow at Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence in the NYC Mayor's Office—have given me perspective about how the classroom translates to the workplace. This enables me equip students with practical skills that help them build rewarding careers.

My preference is to teach econometrics or microeconomics, as these fields relate most closely to my own training and research. For undergraduates, I am comfortable teaching both introductory and advanced subjects in small or large settings. At the graduate level, I am best-suited for applied micro courses, including econometrics, housing, education, health, welfare, labor, public, and urban economics, as well as subject-specific seminars on other

aspects of social policy. I would also relish teaching data-science-style courses that mix coding, statistics, and communicating results.

I've come to appreciate that my biggest stumbling blocks as a student are my greatest advantages as a teacher: knowing all too well what it feels like not to know, I have an empathetic sense of how to help others understand. It is this perspective that pervades my teaching philosophy and goals. I suppose you could say I learned it from intermediate micro.

4   Course Evaluations

Figure 1: Economics 322: Econometrics, Summer 2018

Rutgers University Student Instructional Rating
(Online Survey - Sakai)

Cassidy Michael mtc161 Summer 2018, 01:220:322:B1 — Econometrics (index #00752) Enrollment= 24, Responses= 19 **Part A: University-wide Questions:**	**Student Responses**						**Weighted Means**			
	Strong Disagree 1				**Strong Agree 5**	**No response**	**Section**	**Course**	**Level**	**Dept**
1. The instructor was prepared for class and presented the material in an organized manner.	0	0	0	2	17	0	**4.89**	4.66	4.44	**4.50**
2. The instructor responded effectively to student comments and questions.	0	0	0	3	16	0	**4.84**	4.63	4.37	**4.40**
3. The instructor generated interest in the course material.	0	0	2	2	15	0	**4.68**	4.41	4.33	**4.35**
4. The instructor had a positive attitude toward assisting all students in understanding course material.	0	0	0	3	16	0	**4.84**	4.64	4.43	**4.53**
5. The instructor assigned grades fairly.	0	0	0	3	16	0	**4.84**	4.49	4.42	**4.46**
6. The instructional methods encouraged student learning.	0	0	2	3	14	0	**4.63**	4.32	4.16	**4.20**
7. I learned a great deal in this course.	0	0	1	5	13	0	**4.63**	4.39	4.23	**4.31**
8. I had a strong prior interest in the subject matter and wanted to take this course.	3	3	4	4	5	0	**3.26**	3.41	3.81	**3.88**
	Poor				**Excellent**					
9. I rate the teaching effectiveness of the instructor as:	0	0	0	4	15	0	**4.79**	4.38	4.11	**4.20**
10. I rate the overall quality of the course as:	0	0	2	4	13	0	**4.58**	4.27	4.04	**4.18**

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Figure 1 (Cont.): Economics 322: Econometrics, Summer 2018

What do you like best about this course?:

"The style of teaching. I've taking this course before and with a full-time faculty professor. That professor's style and attitude was horrendous. And that made me hate this course so much. However, taking class this summer with Michael has changed my perspective of this dreadful course. His attitude as well as his understanding of student life stress made this course much more humane. His jokes and real life examples make sense in this technocratic economics course. "

"The professor was organized and relatable. He was informative without being boring. "

"I liked how he always tied in real life examples instead of just focusing on the math, which really helped us learn the concepts."

"The way material was presented. Everything we needed to know was given to us and there wasnt any filler material to take up time and that we would never use."

"Empirical projects"

"The material that I learned"

"I learned a lot of basics on how to analytically evaluate economic factors and there relationships"

"I liked learning about how to interpret different models."

"Information was easily accessible and the assignments helped better your understanding of the material well."

"How I am now able to read data properly in any data set. "

If you were teaching this course, what would you do differently?:

"Nothing. I would adopt Michael's way of teaching. "

"I would just demonstrate a few more examples on how to utilize some of the equations and problems we would come across on homework and exams."

"Nothing"

"Give more frequent tests"

"I would focus more on the students coming up with the relationships of variables in 2018 instead of focusing on studies done 30-50 years ago which have less relevance in today's world "

"I would assign more homework on myeconlab to assure students are often practicing."

"More simplified information and more in class practice examples."

"More examples, but the professor did provide a great number of examples."

In what ways, if any, has this course or the instructor encouraged your intellectual growth and progress?:

"Michael's way of teaching and getting students engaged is particularly very exciting. He pushes our minds into the dimensions of an economists. His way of explaining things by breaking them into the first principles really makes this course worthy of its weight. Econometrics is challenging and a stress booster however, professors like Michael make it seem like a child's play. "

"Yes, I gained an actual interest in econometrics and I enjoy learning about the statistical significance of experiements. I now feel equipped to tackle interesting questions. "

"He has increased my passion for data analysis and has taught me a lot more tools that I can use in the future."

"Numerous ways."

"Learned how to use STATA"

"I want to take Advanced Econoemetrics"

"He was very available and helpful outside of class, both in areas related to the course and also areas that related to my internship"

"As a student who is not the most comfortable with coding, I believe I grew by learning how to use STATA."

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Figure 1 (Cont.): Economics 322: Econometrics, Summer 2018

"He takes his time to explain everything instead of throwing the material at us expecting us to learn it. He really feels for us as students learning a fairly hard subject."

"Taught me that the textbook is super important when you actually need it, unlike many other courses."

"This course and instructor have encouraged me to look at the material in a more positive way than I was in the beginning of the course. "

Other comments or suggestions::

"As a student and a senator on this campus, I give my highest recommendations that Mr. Michael Cassidy shall be granted the privilege of a full time professor in the Economics department here at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. "

"Professor Cassidy was very clear when presenting the topics. His homeworks and projects reinforced the information we learned in class. "

"Thank you for a great experience, this is the best course I have taken in my economics major so far. "

"None."

"N/A"

"Knowledgable professor"

"This instructor showed a great deal of effort and was always prepared for class. He created a positive learning environment. "

"Michael Cassidy has made a class I failed miserably the first time actually make sense. The homework was fairly graded without an overwhelming number of problems- just enough to help us learn the material. He always graded fairly and answered any questions and concerns promptly. I wish he was a professor, I'd take all if his classes!!!"

"Michael Cassidy should be a full time professor here at RU and if he is teaching intermediate macroeconomics I would register for his class in a heartbeat. My favorite professor I have had so far at Rutgers. "

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Figure 2: Economics 322: Econometrics, Summer 2017

Rutgers University Student Instructional Rating
(Online Survey - Sakai)

Cassidy Michael Summer 2017, 01:220:322:B1 — ECONOMETRICS (index #00837) Enrollment= 23, Responses= 3 **Part A: University-wide Questions:**	Student Responses						Weighted Means			
	Strong Disagree 1				Strong Agree 5	No response	Section	Course	Level	Dept
1. The instructor was prepared for class and presented the material in an organized manner.	0	0	0	0	3	0	**5.00**	4.46	4.45	**4.46**
2. The instructor responded effectively to student comments and questions.	0	0	0	0	3	0	**5.00**	4.61	4.43	**4.40**
3. The instructor generated interest in the course material.	0	0	0	0	3	0	**5.00**	4.30	4.32	**4.36**
4. The instructor had a positive attitude toward assisting all students in understanding course material.	0	0	0	0	3	0	**5.00**	4.50	4.52	**4.54**
5. The instructor assigned grades fairly.	0	0	0	0	3	0	**5.00**	4.44	4.44	**4.47**
6. The instructional methods encouraged student learning.	0	0	0	0	3	0	**5.00**	4.20	4.23	**4.21**
7. I learned a great deal in this course.	0	0	0	0	3	0	**5.00**	4.25	4.31	**4.34**
8. I had a strong prior interest in the subject matter and wanted to take this course.	0	0	1	0	2	0	**4.33**	3.75	3.88	**3.82**
	Poor			Excellent						
9. I rate the teaching effectiveness of the instructor as:	0	0	0	0	3	0	**5.00**	4.29	4.26	**4.23**
10. I rate the overall quality of the course as:	0	0	0	0	3	0	**5.00**	4.18	4.24	**4.21**

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Figure 2 (Cont.): Economics 322: Econometrics, Summer 2017

What do you like best about this course?:

"excellent"

"His teaching has a specific point that students can efficiently learn."

"Very interesting tool to measure causality in a complex world, great course."

If you were teaching this course, what would you do differently?:

"Nothing, professor is extremely intelligent and well prepared."

In what ways, if any, has this course or the instructor encouraged your intellectual growth and progress?:

"Opening doors using statistical software and hands on handling of information and measurements was extremely interesting and useful."

Other comments or suggestions::

"Great professor, great class"

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