Ethan Jenkins

Teaching Statement

While at Notre Dame, I have gained valuable experience as a teaching assistant and an instructor of record at the undergraduate level. In Fall 2022, I served as a teaching assistant for Statistics for Economics, a foundational course in probability and statistics. I led a mandatory weekly tutorial that enriched students' understanding of lecture material and exposed them to the basics of programming in Stata. Approximately 15 students were assigned to my tutorial section. Prior to leading this tutorial, I served as a teaching assistant for principles of microeconomics (three times) and principles of macroeconomics. Responsibilities included grading, creating rubrics, holding office hours, assisting with creating course materials such as homework and exams, booking rooms, replying to student emails, and proctoring exams.

In the summer of 2022, I was the instructor of record for Statistics for Economics, an eight-week summer course held online. In this course, I covered the basics of describing data, probability theory, hypothesis testing, and linear regression. Additionally, I taught the students how to perform basic statistical analysis using Stata. An objective of this course was to prepare students for an Econometrics course. A syllabus is available upon request. Course evaluations are included below.

Further, I gained additional teaching experience during my undergraduate studies. At Wheaton College (IL), I was a teaching assistant for the following courses: International Economics, Calculus I, Calculus II, and Abstract Algebra. My responsibilities included grading, leading mandatory tutorials, and leading weekly help sessions. Help sessions for Abstract Algebra were regularly attended by more than 15 students. Due to my extensive experience, I have long been very comfortable standing in front of a class and interacting with students.

Based on my experience and research expertise, I am qualified to teach various courses at the undergraduate level, including Applied Statistics, Econometrics, Principles of Micro, Intermediate Micro, and field courses in Labor Economics, Public Economics, Urban Economics, and Economics of Crime. I am confident in my ability to instruct Causal Inference and field courses at the graduate level. I am well-versed in teaching students how to manage, clean, and analyze data for applied projects using various programming languages, including Stata, R, and Matlab.

Teaching Philosophy and Methods

My teaching philosophy is defined by three core tenets: (1) demonstrate care and concern for students as human beings, (2) create a learning environment that engages plenty of student-to-student and student-to-instructor interactions, (3) stimulate interest in economics by relating course topics to real-world interests.

Students respond best to instructors who demonstrate investment in their personal and academic development. I have learned many small and low-cost ways to demonstrate this care. On the first day of class, I have students either email me or write down their preferred name, experience with the subject, hobbies or other commitments, and any issue or current event of interest. This allows me to follow up on these interests later in the course. Memorizing names is important. After the first day, I put away time to memorize all my students' names to engage them personally moving forward. Further, I am proactive in being approachable. This can be done by being conversational before and after class and not rushing to the next task.

I believe creating an environment where students feel confident to interact with each other and myself is important. These interactions can stimulate and reinforce learning. To encourage these types of interactions, I break up lectures with frequent break-out groups, where students, in groups, work on a problem based on the course material. After completing the problem, we go through the problem as a class. This enables students to learn from each other. Additionally, this allows students to assess how much of the material they know and ask questions immediately rather than later.

I make it a fundamental goal to include real-world applications and interests in courses taught. I do this to generate intrinsic interest in the subject matter. As mentioned earlier, during the first day of class, I ask students to write down any issue or current event of interest. I make sure to include applications for these interests later in the course. Additionally, I start each class with an economics-adjacent or course-relevant trivia question. This accomplishes both goals of creating an interactive learning environment and connecting the course to practical applications. Further, in lectures and homework, I relate course topics to accessible academic research. Making this connection broadens students' view of what studying economics is and how economics can relate to their specific interests.

Lastly, I am determined to keep improving as an instructor. In addition to responding to course evaluations, a practical way I want to improve is to deploy my own Google Form to collect feedback at the midpoint of the course. I look forward to further growth as a teacher, and I thank you for considering my application.

Evaluations

My teaching evaluation scores for Statistics for Economics are included on my website. I have added a selection of student comments from that course and the tutorial I lead. The full list of comments is available on my website.

- "The homework and class material were very helpful for learning the course material. Most of the questions and topics that were addressed in class were similarly addressed on the exams in a way that showed that I learned from the class material."
- "I think since he is a PHD student he has a very good understanding of how students learn and stay engaged. I think he utilized breakout groups in a way that broke up long stretches of material that can get boring at times. Also the independence that the breakout groups provided really helped me to see how much of the material I knew on my own and figure out what questions I still had before taking tests or doing the homework on my own. Another strength that he has is that he is very approachable which made it much easier to ask for help when needed and was always very understanding and willing to reteach material if you didn't understand or couldn't answer a question."
- "He tries to stop and wait for questions, especially when we are covering a lot of material in a short time."
- "Very organized"
- "Super helpful in class and outside of class!"
- "Taking the time to go over the Stata exercises and explain every part in detail instead of just having us copy the commands mindlessly"