Teaching Statement

Ayden Young

I believe economics is best learned the way it is actually practiced: by starting from real questions and reasoning toward the tools that answer them. If a student leaves my course able to recite the steady-state condition in the Solow model but unable to reason about what would move it, I have taught the wrong thing. My aim is the reverse, that students internalize how an economist thinks, what forces bear on a question and how they interact, so that the formal results become tools they can actually use rather than facts they have memorized. My role is to make that reasoning visible, and accessible to every student in the room.

Methods

My core approach is to structure instruction the way a good empirical paper is built, and deliberately not the way a textbook is. A textbook typically opens with definitions and assumptions, presents the model, and arrives at an application only at the end. I reverse that order. I begin with the motivating question and the real-world phenomenon, develop the intuition, and only then introduce the formal model and the assumptions it rests on. The goal is that students understand what a model is for before they are asked to manipulate it.

Teaching the IS curve is a representative example. In the context of the course more broadly, we are discussing how we might study short-run fluctuations in output moving above and below its long-run potential in response to real-world shocks. This naturally motivates the question: what factors drive the fluctuations. We can see, intuitively and then through the final equation itself, that short-run output responds to aggregate demand shocks and changes in the real interest rate. Only once that intuition is in place do I introduce the curve more formally with its origins in the national accounting identity and a set of simplifying assumptions. By the time the formal equation appears, students already know what it is doing and can see its assumptions as deliberate choices rather than arbitrary rules.

This structure only works, however, if the intuition is genuinely accessible, so the practices I rely on are built around meeting students where they are. I work problems step by step rather than presenting only finished solutions, I translate technical results into plan language anchored in current examples, and in quantitative courses I teach tools live, such as walking through Stata code and figure generation during intro to econometrics, so students can reproduce the analysis themselves. I pace to the room rather than to my notes and treat a model's assumptions as things to question rather than flatly accept.

Experience

I have taught Intermediate Macroeconomics as instructor of record at two institutions: at UC Santa Cruz over a condensed summer term, and currently at San Jose State University. Teaching the same course across two different student populations has required me to adapt materials, pacing, and examples to distinct levels of preparation and institutional context, and it has made clear to me that the teaching approach is only as good as its ability to meet a particular room of students where they are. Alongside these instructor roles, I have served as a teaching assistant across a broad span of curriculum, from introductory macroeconomics and econometrics through public finance, U.S.

economic history, and graduate-level mathematical methods.

Across these courses and both roles, what stands out is the consistency of what students value. Independently, and in course after course, students have credited the same practices I describe above: working through problems step by step, translating technical material into plain language, and grounding concepts in current, real-world examples. In my econometrics sections, students specifically pointed to live walkthroughs of Stata and figure generation as what made the assignments approachable. That the same approach draws the same response across macroeconomics, econometrics, and a range of field courses gives me confidence it is a genuine teaching method rather than a set of course-specific habits.

Teaching Interests and Range

I am prepared to teach across the core of the undergraduate economics curriculum and into several fields. I have taught intermediate macroeconomics as instructor of record and can readily teach the broader macroeconomic sequence, including introductory macroeconomics. My teaching assistant experience has given me direct preparation in empirical and quantitative methods, spanning introductory econometrics, statistical computing in Python, and graduate-level mathematical methods for economics, and I would be well suited to teach courses across this area. I also have experience supporting field courses in public finance and U.S. economic history, areas that connect closely to my own research in public and urban economics.

Looking ahead, I would be especially glad to develop an upper-level field course in public or urban economics that draws directly on my research, and to contribute a course in empirical methods for policy analysis, building on my experience teaching students to construct and evaluate evidence-based arguments.