

EVIDENCE OF TEACHING ABILITY

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At the University of California, Davis I have spent ten quarters as a teaching assistant and designed and taught two of my own courses. These opportunities have provided me with extensive teaching experience, which has allowed me to hone my craft as an educator, and has affirmed my passion for teaching. My goal as a teacher is to equip students with the tools necessary to engage with economic thinking both in and out of the classroom. I strive to not only make the material accessible and relevant to students, but also to develop in my students a passion for the material. I create an engaged classroom by presenting students with real world examples while conveying my own enthusiasm for the subject. The student evaluation of my last three quarters as a teaching assistant, demonstrate that I am a dedicated, effective and passionate teacher.

Table 1: Student Evaluation of Teaching as Teaching Assistant

	International Trade Winter 2011	International Trade Spring 2011	Introductory Microeconomics Fall 2011	Department Average 2009-2012
	Percent of students who responded "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"			
• This discussion section was a good educational experience.	98%	100%	86%	–
• Overall, the TA did a good job in this course.	98%	100%	98%	–
	Overall Teaching Score (out of five)			
	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.28
Obs.	42	35	58	NA

My teaching style has been shaped by my experiences both as a teaching assistant and as an instructor. The students respond positively to my passion for the material:

"Phil was great! Really enjoyed taking his class wish I could take another. Very passionate and knowledgeable about subject matter."

"Very knowledgeable of the material. Stimulated good discussion. Passionate about the topics."

"I really like Phil's enthusiasm and he made it really easy to understand the information. I don't get bored in discussion so Phils doing something right."

The students also appreciate my clear, deliberate articulation of concepts:

“This was my final course for my econ degree, and you were by far the most clearly organized and knowledgeable TA I’ve ever had. Thanks and good luck.”

“He is very well organized and helps students see the big picture of the material. He is clear and presents topics very well. Easy to understand. I go to every discussion.”

“Phil is a great TA because he speaks very clearly. He is also energetic and always has a good attitude. Knows and explains the material well in discussion, good at simplifying the material for better understanding.”

I applied these lessons when I taught my first class, in the summer of 2012, an upper-division International Macroeconomics course at UC Davis. I was responsible for designing the course, managing a teaching assistant, preparing my lectures, and creating all coursework, including homeworks and exams. I worked hard to explain concepts clearly and teach with enthusiasm:

“Best teacher I’ve had in the econ dept thus far, really clear and organized w/ his thoughts and broke concepts down in a manner I could actually understand.”

“Very clear and easy to understand. Extremely approachable/nice. Helps whenever possible.”

“Honestly one of the best professors I’ve had. Extremely helpful during office hours and always readily available. Very fair grader, clear and enthusiastic. :) !!”

Teaching for the first time also allowed me the opportunity improve as an educator. As a first time instructor I relied heavily on technology as a teaching tool, which included the use of lecture slides. Lecturing with the aid of slides had many advantages—it allowed me to graphically display data and helped me clearly articulate my points. However, I found that students were more engaged when taught without lecture slides, and I decided that PowerPoint, while helpful for some things such as displaying data, sometimes led to passive learning.

I took my second course, International Trade, as an opportunity to hone my teaching skills. I thought hard about how to most effectively utilize technology in the classroom to present the important concepts of international trade and how to make sure students were engaged and learning actively. I decided to rely less on lecture slides, and make a concerted effort to connect real world examples to everything I taught. I had my students read newspaper articles and even listen to NPR podcasts about tire tariffs and trade disputes with Brazil, which we later discussed in class. As a result of these changes, students were more engaged:

“I am very interested in international trade and much of it has to do with how the professor taught the class. He did a great job and was very clear.”

“By far my favorite instructor at UC Davis. Patient, passionate, helpful, and not intimidating. I am such a big fan. I wish he was teaching 160B in the fall.”

“Prof Luck, you are an amazing professor. You go out of your way to help students and to make sure we understand the material. I enjoyed taking your class last year and I enjoyed it even more this year. I think you will be one of the few professors at UCD that I will never forget. I wish you the best in whatever you plan to do after finishing your Ph.D. you are an awesome guy.”

Both of these teaching experiences reconfirmed my passion for teaching and my desire to continue to teach at the university level. Table 2 have highlights a few of the key items from the “student evaluation of teaching” survey from the two courses I taught. For both classes my overall effectiveness exceeded the departmental average and in my second course, International Trade, the changes I made to my teaching approach appear to have been effective, as evidenced by a 11 percentage point increase in student evaluations. Complete survey results as well as all unedited student comments are available by request.

Table 2: Student Evaluations of Teaching as Instructor

	International Macroeconomics 2012	International Trade 2013	Departmental Average 2012 – 2013 [†]
% of students who responded “excellent” or “good”			
• Clarity and organization of instructor’s presentation	84%	92%	–
• Instructor’s responsiveness to difficulties understanding material	82%	97%	–
• Intellectual challenge of this course	86%	97%	–
• Overall evaluation of the instructor’s teaching	86%	97%	84%
Obs.	50	36	1631

[†] Department average overall effectiveness from the two summer sessions in 2012 and 2013. Individually the effectiveness rating each summer was 85.1 and 82.9 for 2012 and 2013 respectively.