Teaching Philosophy

As a teacher, I focus on nurturing students' curiosity and developing their skills to satisfy their curiosity. In particular, I aim to foster students' intuitive understanding of economics, which will enable them to narrow down general questions and form their *hypotheses* about the real world. To *test* these hypotheses and *communicate* their findings effectively, students need basic statistical knowledge and data visualization skills. My teaching philosophy is influenced by my experiences as a teaching assistant at UC San Diego with Prof. James Rauch and Prof. Fabian Eckert, teaching Middle East Economics and Cities, Inequality, Innovation (Urban Economics).

As an economics teacher, I want my students to **base their understanding of economics on empirical facts**. In my class, I will motivate economic ideas with empirical patterns from daily news and encourage students to understand why these patterns make sense or pose puzzles from an economic perspective. For instance, when teaching competitive markets, I will show gas price patterns across stations and ask students why some gas stations can charge higher prices than others. Such connections between data and economics help students develop a solid foundation to "reverse engineer" from data patterns to falsifiable claims.

My second goal is to teach students **how to organize and visualize data to answer economic questions**. To accomplish this, I will design step-by-step assignments through which students answer economic questions they care about. I design such assignments with Prof. Rauch in the course "Middle East Economics."

Visualizing data in ways tightly connected to hypotheses requires training. When I first TA'd "Middle East Economics," I assumed students were familiar with scatterplots, since Prof. Rauch often used them in lectures. However, when students were asked to present data visualizations on topics they were interested in, most chose histograms and pie charts, even when scatterplots are better suited for their purposes. With this observation, Prof. Rauch and I decided to ask students to use scatterplots to test their hypotheses in future courses. The assignment has two parts: the first requires students to state their hypothesis, choose appropriate X and Y-axis variables, and indicate whether they expect a positive, negative, or flat slope. The second part required students to write a short paper in which they plotted the proposed graph from the first task, described their findings, and identified any limitations in their methodology.

A key challenge for students was narrowing their questions to those *testable* with publicly available data. Guiding them through this process, particularly by helping them map abstract concepts to variables in publicly available datasets and teaching them how to organize data into a scatterplot-ready structure, proved to be my most rewarding teaching experience at UC San Diego. Students enjoyed these practical assignments and benefited from the discussions with me, as shown by their positive feedback below.

Similarly, in "Cities, Inequality, Innovation," Prof. Eckert and I designed assignments that required students to use maps to test their hypotheses. These teaching experiences convince me that students, regardless of their statistical expertise, can learn to use data visualization to test ideas.

Based on my teaching and research experience, I am happy to teach the Principles of Economics, Public Policy Analysis, Econometrics, Public Economics, and Development Economics at the undergraduate level. For graduate-level courses, I am prepared to teach Public Economics and Development Economics. Two **TA Excellence Awards** at UC San Diego demonstrate my passion and commitment to teaching.

Evidence of Effective Teaching

Undergraduate students at UC San Diego voluntarily and anonymously provide their TA evaluations. Below, I list encouraging feedback from students and provide summary statistics of my teaching evaluation.

1. **Middle East Economics**
    - Wei-Lin definitely was one of the most helpful and resourceful TA's at UCSD
    - Weilin helped me during office hours with regard to my assignment and he provided comments on my assignment to help me focus on improvements for the final assignment.
    - He is the most respectful, kind, and patient person I have seen. He really acts like he is your close friend, not your TA. He is very approachable and flexible in the sense of office hours. He even responds on weekends and late night times. He is a hero in one word. I loved Weilin. I wish the best for him and I hope he will become a teacher one day because he will be the best teacher.
    - He was very helpful for any and all assignments given throughout the course. I appreciated his patience and enthusiasm to help students. I would definitely recommend Wei-Lin to other students in need of help, and hope he does well throughout the rest of grad school.
    - Weilin is a really caring TA and is always willing to help students. He made Econ 165 more enjoyable!
    - I went to his office hours for help with the paper, and he helped me a lot by talking and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of my paper, which helped me go further a lot
    - Gives good feedback on tasks and comes off as extremely helpful and approachable to all students!
    - This TA is awesome and I hope he could be my TA for the rest of my college career.
    - Weilin was very responsive to emails and approachable! Especially when it came to our project.
2. **Cities, Inequality, Innovation**
    - He is really patient and friendly and is reachable outside class via emails. He really wants to help you succeed in this class.
    - Weilin did an amazing job helping students with assignments and answered all the questions they had. He is a great TA and I hope he will be TA-ing for other courses as well.
3. **Principles of Macroeconomics**
    - I appreciate how he listened to some students' feedback and changed his discussion format to include more examples.
    - I really appreciated how he stayed an extra 20 minutes after my discussion with him had ended to explain economics on a more intuitive scale. My section was only myself and one other student, and he really took the opportunity to ensure that we were understanding his explanations of the course material and allow us to build more intuition for the material rather than just surface-level knowledge.

Table 1: Summary of Students' Evaluations

Courses	# of Quarters	# of Students	Response rate (%)	Recommend (%)
Middle East Economics	5	521	12	90.4
Cities, Inequality, Innovation	1	39	10.2	100
Principles of Macroeconomics	2	919	2.5	95.6
Long Run Macroeconomics	1	180	5.5	90
Indian Economy	1	87	3.4	100
Economics of Education	1	101	16.8	94.1

Notes: Data for "Recommend" comes from the question "I would recommend this Instructional Assistant to other students." I code the response as 1 if the students answered "strongly agree" or "agree", 0 otherwise. For courses I TA'd multiple times, I compute the response rate and the percent of students recommending by stacking up student responses across offerings.