



CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES 228-77
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Teaching Statement

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Why do I want to teach economics? There are two main reasons. First, I believe that an understanding of economics and game theory is essential for anyone who wants to take an active role as a global citizen. At Caltech, Econ 11 students are asked to write a weekly case study from an issue in the newspapers or in their personal lives. This exercise has given me the privilege to witness many “aha” moments, such as understanding how limited edition products create demand and why libraries cannot be built out of voluntary contributions. This reminds me of my personal journey from a computer scientist who was passively overwhelmed by the complexity of human institutions and the undervaluation of natural and social resources into a social scientist who is actively using the tools of economics to refine questions and pursue answers.

Second, I enjoy being around people. Teaching is a rewarding opportunity to understand what is important to others and to discover the extent to which I can help them achieve their goals. Teaching benefits my research: my best ideas arise when students and practitioners challenge me and ask “why is this important?”. During my time as a graduate student I actively sought opportunities to teach: I not only led economics recitation sessions at Caltech and mentored graduate and undergraduate researchers, but also volunteered as a mathematics tutor at both Pasadena public schools and Los Angeles homeless shelters. These disparate experiences have taught me to adapt to students of many different levels and to utilize narratives, visual aids, and group activities to communicate technical concepts. When problems arise, I often refer to Peter Filene’s book *The Joy of Teaching* and draw from insights from the Caltech Project for Effective Teaching workshops. Enthusiastic student evaluations from my recitation sessions at Caltech seem to indicate that this approach is working.

My solid microeconomics background prepares me to teach microeconomics, behavioral economics, and any course in applied microeconomics (including public, environmental, and labor economics). I believe that students also need experimental and empirical tools to test whether the implication of an economic model is correct. My teaching experience at Caltech has taught me to integrate experimental methods in the classroom. For example, running a double auction can be a memorable introduction to the concept of demand and supply, and simulating a labor market in the classroom can spur a lively discussion of moral hazard. Through my research and four years on the board of Caltech’s Engineers for a Sustainable World, I have also developed a method of structuring a line of economic questioning around issues faced by local organizations. I will therefore welcome the opportunity to integrate service learning components into my classroom.