

Looking back to my journey as a student of economics, I can identify the undeniable effect of the few good teachers who stand out as role-models. As someone who switched to studying economics at the graduate level from an undergraduate degree in computer science and engineering, I immediately fell in love with the analytical and data driven approach to answer important questions in the field. The classes I took at Berkeley had an effect beyond just equipping me with tools to do my job well, as it taught me to think using a different framework, and to identify and evaluate new contributions to the burgeoning field of development economics. I propose to follow these key principles as I chart my own journey as a teacher: (a) developing a relevant curriculum to the times, (b) co-learning as new tools and content emerge, (c) practicum-based learning focused on applications, and (d) inclusive teaching.

I had an opportunity to formally teach as a teaching assistant¹ for four semesters during my time as a master and a doctoral student at the University of California, Berkeley. In my role, I focused on applying lecture material to practice problems and real world policy challenges. In addition, I supplemented this with discussing important new developments in the world, news stories, and the implications of research in the real world. Additionally, I have also had the opportunity to mentor many graduate and undergraduate students in developing their course and thesis projects. Two of my mentees are currently pursuing PhD programs in applied economics fields and many have gone on to pursue careers in the industry and the development sector. I believe that being a good mentor is an important aspect of being an effective teacher.

A key challenge I often encounter is the varying degrees of preparedness among undergraduate students for quantitative courses in economics. For example, it is common to come across some students who have never taken an advanced course in mathematics, including multivariate calculus. This creates additional challenge when communicating about complex economic framework of partial and general equilibria (including first and second welfare theorems). However, most students have a good handle on economic intuition from their real world experiences. Therefore, I often use tools such as visual aids, including advanced interactive graphic tools², which make it easier to communicate these complex concepts. In addition to structured weekly office hours, I always make myself available for students for a one-on-one tutoring whenever they need.

I am looking forward to teaching my own undergraduate course on economic development as an instructor this upcoming Winter quarter 2023 at UC San Diego. Specifically, I plan to embed topics on law and economics within the standard undergraduate course on development economics to bridge the division between macro (growth, political economy and institutions, economic geography) and micro (credit, health, education) topics. One of the key reasons that this specific topic can serve as a useful bridge, which I have learnt from own research, is the availability of micro-data to observe the behavior of economic agents that can be aggregated to observe macro-economic outcomes. With the help of student and peer feedback, I plan to develop this course further and make the material and tools available for anyone to teach this course in a different setting.

¹Graduate Student Instructor, as they are termed in University of California Berkeley.

²For example, explore this website - <https://ncase.me/trust/> - that explains coordination and trust games in economics.