

Teaching Statement

Eric Fischer

Department of Economics

University of California, Santa Cruz

I get excited about teaching students, creating course content, and providing students with the skills they need to conduct their own original research and prepare for their future. My experiences as an instructor, as an overseas field research coordinator, and as a teaching assistant have enhanced my teaching and allowed me to find the best ways to develop the critical writing, research, analytical, and presentation skills of my students. I find teaching enjoyable because I go beyond just teaching what is in a textbook and get students to open their minds, ask interesting questions, and use the tools of economic analysis for their own research and careers.

I. Instructor Experience

In Spring 2015, I had the opportunity to teach my own undergraduate research discovery seminar “Econ 196: Financial Crises – Morals and Markets” as part of a new initiative called the Chancellor’s Graduate Teaching Fellowship (CGTF) to fund up to 10 new courses across the university created and taught by graduate students to undergraduate majors and non-majors. The main objective of my course was to teach students about the most critical economic and moral issues related to the financial crisis and to give students the opportunity to pursue their own individual and original research projects related to the course material.

I spent significant time designing the course syllabus and content. The book by Financial Times economics editor Martin Wolf “*The Shifts and the Shocks: What We’ve Learned – and Have Still to Learn – From the Financial Crisis*” provided the class with foundational material about the financial crisis. The book by Daniel Friedman and Daniel McNeill “*Morals and Markets: The Dangerous Balance*” provided material about the moral and ethical dimensions related to financial crises and was useful for class discussions. In addition, there were readings from the Office of Financial Research, Financial Times, The Guardian, Federal Reserve, Bank of England, Vox.eu, the Institute for International Economics, and various academic journals.

I created all four homework assignments to provide students with the skills to think about and carry out their own projects. The assignments included an introduction and 3 topics, obtaining and graphing data exercise, a financial crisis analysis exercise, and a research proposal. There were also periodic quizzes about the readings. The midterm exam consisted of questions about economic theory, bubbles manias crashes, financial regulation, the US financial crisis, and the Eurozone crisis that required students to think critically about the issues we learned in class and to draw upon multiple sources in their responses.

Here are a few unedited comments made by students from the class:

- “Eric was very enthusiastic and passionate about this course and that made me want to learn the material more.”
- “He was very open to the ideas of his students, and was able to use questions and comments as jumping-off points to help us learn, especially when that meant going back and explaining something that he took for background knowledge.”

- “Eric was there for his students, and always open to meet with them.”

There were 20 students in the class and the last few sessions of the course were devoted to student presentations of their own individual research projects. It was a lot of fun. We had a referee for each paper presentation and I could see them teach each other using what they had learned from the course. A few of their research paper topics included: “Bond Yields in the Eurozone: What they Tell us About Sovereign Debt Recovery”, “Analyzing the Beanie Baby Bubble through the Lens of Kindleberger and Minsky”, “The Effect of the 2008 Crisis on the US-China Economic Relationship”, and “The 2008 Crisis and Income Inequality in the United States”. Everyone had a different topic and they were all interesting to read in the end.

II. Overseas Research Teaching Experience

In summer 2012, I served as the field research coordinator for the University of San Francisco and advised five master’s degree students collecting data for their theses in international and development economics in Amman, Jordan. We partnered with a microfinance bank and conducted surveys and experiments all across the country. Each student had their own research question and survey they were using to collect their data. We also had 4 Jordanian enumerators to help with the survey implementation. I advised and coordinated all of their research projects, provided data and econometrics support, trained the enumerators, and handled many logistical and research related issues. I used my Arabic as we implemented 300 surveys and conducted 250 economic experiments all across the country. I also helped answer questions and provided support after their return to the University of San Francisco so that they could all complete and defend their master’s theses. A few of their titles include: “Why Risk It: The Effect of Risk and Time Preferences on Microfinance Default” and “Risk, Religion, and Islamic Microfinance”.

III. Teaching Assistant Experience

I also have experience as a teaching assistant (TA) for a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses at University of California, Santa Cruz, University of San Francisco, and Georgetown University. My responsibilities included correcting exams, holding office hours and planning sections, and delivering lectures. At Santa Cruz, I was the TA for a wide variety of undergraduate economics and history courses: Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Why Economies Succeed or Fail, US Economic History, Modern Middle East History, and Econometrics. As head TA for Macroeconomics, I also provided training to new teaching assistants, created the homework assignments, developed weekly TA notes, and handled all the logistical aspects of the course. I have received consistently high evaluations.

IV. Desired Teaching

I have experience teaching introductory and advanced undergraduate courses in economics. I also have experience developing and teaching an undergraduate research seminar on financial crises and would enjoy doing this again or creating a similar research oriented course. My ideal course is international finance, international economics, money and banking, international financial markets, econometrics, and economic development.