

Mehrdad Esfahani

Teaching Statement

Overarching Themes in My Teaching

My main philosophy in teaching is student engagement. I believe learning happens by some form of doing, and the best teachers are those who can engage students in the subject and elicit emotional responses in them while teaching logical and rational arguments. This philosophy has been the center of my teaching, whether as an instructor who designs the whole course, or a teaching assistant who is in charge of review sessions.

The second theme in my teaching is particular attention to technology and flexibility in delivering content across different platforms. One of my unique skills is familiarity with online education and teaching. I have completed multiple classes on online platforms such as [Coursera](#) and [edX](#) as a student, and was deeply involved with assisting professor Hobijn in online teaching at ASU. As a result of these investments, I am completely familiar with online teaching and do not have any technology barriers to teach online classes.

Student Engagement in the Class

During my teaching in the classroom, I use different tools in order to engage students in active learning. For instance, in my [Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory](#) class that I taught in the Summer of 2019, for which I won the **Distinguished Economics Graduate Instructor** award, I showed students a particular graph and asked questions about what they see in the graph and what they mean. These graphs range from the U.S. real GDP level since the WWII, to the contribution of different earnings percentiles to overall tax collection.

Another form of student engagement during my class is to use a worksheet with simple questions on them and ask them to answer those questions in class. I then go over those questions and show students how they can think about them. On occasion, students come up with multiple ways of solving a problem which is a valuable learning opportunity for everyone, including myself.

Student Engagement outside of the Class

Student engagement does not end in the classroom. There are plenty of opportunities that are available outside the classroom to teach and engage students actively in the subject of the class. These include online economic games that students can play and learn from, as well as books/articles that are not part of the required reading for the class. An example of the online game is [The Fiscal Ship](#), designed by [Brooking Institute](#). In this game, students experiment with different fiscal policies and how they can reduce or exacerbate the debt problem that the U.S. economy is wrestling with. The articles that I suggest to students are usually from [The Economist](#) magazine about the past and current economic trends. Students are encouraged to

come to my office either during office hours or by appointment and discuss any issue they have regarding the course or ask for extra materials that can help them learn beyond a standard class.

Online Education

Online education has been on the rise in the past decade and after the Covid-19 pandemic, its value has risen considerably. Prior to the pandemic, I was preparing myself for online teaching, even though many universities did not have fully online programs. ASU is a leader of online education which created a perfect opportunity for me to immerse myself in online teaching. I have spent enough time moderating the online forum for the [Macroeconomic Principles \(Online\)](#), taught by Professor Hobijn, to understand the nuances of online teaching. Creating content relevant to an online platform is crucial; one cannot simply use the slides or notes for an in-person class in online teaching. I have transformed my course materials with JavaScript in a format that is suitable for online education. Moreover, my class materials are automated to create multiple version of the same class with minimal effort using a set of Python codes. These codes fully integrate with different online platforms including but not limited to the [Canvas](#) platform.

Teaching Evaluation

These are some instances of endorsement by students in my classes:

[Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory, Instructor](#)

- “Professor Esfahani is an excellent instructor the class was easy to understand. I have no complaints about how the material was taught. I believe something excellent is he also uploads course content online including lectures which I believe is excellent and should be continued.”
- “Great slides, terrific lectures (i only missed one lecture), clear and concise expectations.”

[Microeconomic Analysis I, Teaching Assistant](#)

- “Mehrdad was always very helpful, friendly and could answer any question. I had a feeling that he was always prepared and ready to guide us in the right direction.”

Teaching Portfolio

Instructor

- [Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory](#), Summer 2019
- [Syllabus, Student Evaluation: 4.8/5](#)

Graduate Classes, Teaching Assistant

- [Macroeconomic Analysis I](#), Professors [Gustavo Ventura](#) and [Galina Vereshchagina](#), Fall 2018
- [Microeconomic Analysis II](#), Professor [Alejandro Manelli](#), Spring 2017
- [Microeconomic Analysis I](#), Professor [Edward Schlee](#), Fall 2016

Undergraduate Classes, Teaching Assistant

- [Applied Regression Analysis](#), Professor [Alex Hill](#), Fall 2020
- [Macroeconomic Principles \(Online\)](#), Professor [Bart Hobijn](#), Summer 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020
- [Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory](#), Professor [Alex Hill](#), Spring 2018
- [Mathematical Economics](#), Professor [Kevin Reffett](#), Spring 2018

- Introduction to Econometrics, Professor [Alvin Murphy](#), Fall 2017

———— *Possible Future Classes to Teach*

Graduate Classes

- Macroeconomics
- Labor Economics
- Computational Methods

Undergraduate Classes

- Principles of economics, microeconomics, macroeconomics
- Intermediate/Honors Macroeconomics
- Mathematical Economics
- Econometrics
- Economic Development
- Labor Economics
- Public Finance