Teaching Statement

Melissa Tartari, Yale University, melissa.tartari@yale.edu

Throughout my undergraduate teaching at the University of Pennsylvania as a graduate student and at Yale as an assistant professor, I have aimed to advance my students’ comprehension of economics by pursuing four related goals.

First, I seek to foster students’ appreciation for the diversity and richness of approaches that applied and empirical economists employ in their inquires. By engaging multiple approaches, I hope to help students recognize that there is no single method or stance on a particular question—at least not descriptively. Second, I strive to enable students to think of economics as a *modus operandi*. To accomplish this I always make sure to set forth the theory on which each empirical inquiry rests and to illustrate the empirical facts that have inspired a theory or that have been used to test or refine it. To achieve this goal I avoid exclusive reliance on text-books and, instead, include primary literature, even in the most introductory classes. Third, all my classes ask students to build on what they have learnt in prior classes, be it introductory microeconomics, linear algebra, calculus, statistics, etc.. I believe that the risk of providing a compartmentalized education is great. Hence, as an instructor I constantly endeavor to connect my lectures, whatever their subject, with my students’ broader studies. Fourth, I devote serious energy to showcasing the ability of economics to speak to pressing real-world issues and concerns. Gaining an understanding of these issues is what attracted most of the students in my classes to the economics major. Thus, I want to make sure that they remain aware of the substantive questions that underpin the lectures’ material even when much of what we do in class deals with the more technical aspects of such material.

Since 2007 I have created and taught four kinds of undergraduate courses at Yale. They are a probability *cum* statistics *cum* introductory econometrics lecture and laboratory class (ECON 131), an econometrics lecture and laboratory class (ECON 136), a labor and public economics seminar class (ECON 482), and a labor and public economics lecture class (ECON 401). ECON 131 is a required class for the economics major and it enrolls 100+ students with different backgrounds, skills, and interests. ECON 136 is a required class for the economics & mathematics major, it is the second leg of a sequence that involves a one-semester probability and statistics lecture class. It enrolls 30+ students with strong analytical skills and interests. Students typically take both 131 and 136 in their junior year. ECON 482 and 401 are elective classes geared to advanced students, typically seniors; they differ mostly in their format (lecture versus seminar) and in the nature of the assignments.

Next, I elaborate on selected features of each class in order to illustrate how I have pursued the four goals described at the outset of this statement. In all classes, I have modelled and structured opportunities for my students to practice tracking and contributing to discussion, careful reading, critical and creative analytical thinking, and clear and persuasive writing. For instance, with respect to discussion, I do not limit myself
to encouraging students to ask questions during lecture time. Rather, I reward a student for attempting to answer the questions raised by other students (by means of bonus points counted towards the final grade). Importantly, I build discussion into lectures in a systematic fashion by devoting a few lectures to in-class presentations of journal articles. This means that each student has the chance of wearing two hats: presenter and formal discussant to another student’s presentation. In the seminar classes, I have enriched and expanded this format by inviting outside speakers who function as discussants. For instance, in the spring of 2011 an academic economist, an economist employed at the Federal Researve Bank of Chicago, a journalist from the New York Times, and a journalist from the Wall Street Journal attended four of my ECON 401 classes. The students presented and discussed both academic journal articles as well as the newspaper articles written by the journalists, and what ensued was an incredibly lively and enriching discussion that seamlessly moved from technical/academic arguments to current events, concerns, and perceptions. As another example, consider careful reading. I design almost all written assignments around a small set of journal articles. By answering the questions in the assignments, the students learn how to truly read an article, that is, how to eviscerate its arguments, probe its statements, comprehend what its assumptions yield and what constraints they impose, and how to conceive promising and/or compelling extensions.

Perhaps the best way to gauge my performance as an instructors is to read what students say in their end-of-semester evaluations. What follows is a sample of comments, reproduced verbatim, by the students of two of the classes I have taught. They speak to the four goals I endeavour to pursue as a teacher.

**Econ 136 (Econometrics)**  “The course is very structured from the beginning. You know exactly what you’re getting into, and the course gave a very full introduction to econometrics, as well as ways all the methods are applied in research.”

“This class is rough but incredibly rewarding. It was by far my favorite class this year. It is so useful and relevant, and Professor Tartari was great. She really cares about the material and is willing to slow down if there are questions. She keeps you on your feet at 9am, but also is sure to include lots of examples and real-life applications to show how to use the class. Even if you’re not Econ&Math, I would definitely recommend this track if you’re at all interested in doing your own research.”

“The class provides a thorough coverage of many econometric topics, from simple linear to multivariable and time-series regression. More importantly, it places a great emphasis on teaching students how to understand the purpose, approach and use of econometric. Combined with the fundamental knowledge of statistics and regression, the class gives students a powerful instrument to deal with questions of economic importance in a systemic, analytical way.”

“Professor Tartari is very outstanding and passionate. She shows a strong personal commitment to the true cause of teaching, pushing students to fully understand and reproduce proofs based on their own understanding rather than merely regurgitating memorized formulae. She gives a lot of respect to students and often polls students’ wants and expectations in the class.”

“This is a very good and useful class. It is way more useful and practical than a basic statistic class, where you learn and then quickly forget all kinds of distributions. This class actually shows students how the field of statistics is applied in order to interpret and understand questions of economic importance.”

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1See the accompanying teaching evaluations.
"A strength of this course is that when the semester ended, I definitely felt more comfortable with my ability to analyze economic data and journal articles and it is clear that I learned a lot this semester."

"After taking Econ 136 you will surprise yourself by being actually able to read all the stats and econometric analysis on an article which you usually skip before. It definitely helps you to understand the foundation of the argument in a profound way."

"It is probably one of the most useful classes I have taken in the econ department. Econometrics provides me a very insightful tool to analyze the world, which I find really fascinating. It is a class with a good combination of theories and applications."

**ECON 401 (Labor and Public Policy)**  
"The class is one of the few that asks you to take what you learn in your intermediate micro class and apply the theory to real world problems. I learned so much about the public labor policy of the United States, and learned how to apply theory to understand policy ideas."

"I would warn students that this class has quite a bit of advanced math and econometrics involved. However, if you are willing to put in the time to work on problem sets and go to office hours, this has the potential to be one of the more rewarding classes you will take at Yale."

"Labor economics was an incredibly interesting class. At times, the level of econometrics and statistics was a bit too complicated for my understanding, but Prof. Tartari makes an effort to make sure you understand these parts well before moving on."

"I would recommend this course if you know your econometrics and are willing to spend hours on a problem set (which were sometimes so brutal). Yet, I think very differently because of this course. It really gets you to think like an economist."