

Teaching Statement

Chandler Lester

Teaching Philosophy

I have three primary teaching objectives: to stimulate students' interest in the economy and the effects of policy on individual economic outcomes, to minimize disparities in student outcomes based on gender and race, and to lower barriers for low-income students. These goals are motivated by my status as an economist, a woman, and a first-generation scholar as well as my extensive experience in the classroom with students from a variety of backgrounds.

My first aim is to make economics exciting and relatable. In my introductory course, I often discuss current events with my students and assign podcasts relating economics to real-world topics. I emphasize how policy decisions influence students' lives by explaining the relationship between monetary policy and its impacts on student loans and the overall economy. During the coronavirus pandemic, I lectured about the effects of the emergency stimulus packages and their impact on households. I also outlined the results of these policies on the economy using models we had already developed in the course. According to student feedback, I achieve my goal of making economics compelling. I motivate students to pursue economic studies by creating presentations for my introductory course that display what economic research in various fields accomplishes. Also, at the end of each term, I email exceptional students to encourage them to study economics. Since I build rapport with my students, several have reached out to me after taking my class and asked for help becoming an economics major or for recommendation letters for economics master's programs.

I have taught both introductory and intermediate macroeconomics at the University of Oregon; before teaching these courses, I had experience grading for both of them. As a grader, I observed that these classes (unintentionally) had grade distributions that favored men. The top ten highest-scores in my courses have reliably been equally distributed between genders, an outcome that is reflective of my dedication to close the gender gap in economics. I take steps to close the gender gap by encouraging my classrooms to have vocal students who are both men and women, and preventing individuals from dominating classroom conversations. I motivate this outcome by making my class a welcoming environment and including economic research by women and men with diverse backgrounds in my lectures.

To make my classroom more accessible to low-income and working students, I never require students to purchase textbooks or other class materials. I also try to be as flexible as possible with deadlines and emphasize my status as a first-generation college graduate and former working student. During my undergraduate experience, I worked in catering and as a math tutor to pay for living expenses. Between these two jobs, I often worked 40 hours a week and often could not meet with professors outside of class. Because of this experience, I un-

derstand that some students need to work and that juggling work and a full course load can make attending office hours and completing assignments difficult. To prevent socioeconomic status from determining student outcomes, I know that instructors must offer flexibility in due dates and office hours.

Learning Objectives

When teaching introductory and intermediate macroeconomics, I prepare students for everyday macroeconomic discourse and further studies in economics. I understand that some of the students in my classes might never take another economics course but will engage in conversations with their friends and family about macroeconomic policies. In my introductory course, I place a great deal of emphasis on reading newspapers and engaging with news in an educated manner, so that students can later read information about the worldwide economy and understand it. I also understand that some students might pursue graduate studies in economics. To prepare these students, without leaving others behind, I help them build solid modeling and mathematical skills. Often in my intermediate course, I give examples of how we can solve problems using higher-level mathematics and simplifications using algebra.

Mentoring & Engagement

I always appreciate the opportunity to work with students one-on-one. Getting to help students navigate new material and make sure they are absorbing it is fulfilling and essential to me because I did not get those opportunities during my undergraduate studies. I also appreciate it when students ask me for future coursework recommendations since I can use my knowledge of fields within economics and help students make connections to professors and research that interest them. Because of this, and the fact that I am great at organizing and making schedules (I was a triple major in undergraduate, which took a lot of planning), I would enjoy advising undergraduates and doing research with them. I would also love to design curricula to help classes be accessible and low cost for all students.

Future

As a theorist and math enthusiast, I am well equipped to teach classes that introduce students to modeling and mathematical concepts. Math and modeling are aspects of teaching intermediate macroeconomics that I've excelled at, and my skill would translate well to graduate-level macroeconomics or even intermediate microeconomics. Even though my dissertation is primarily theoretical, I have worked on some empirical projects and possess a Bachelor's degree in statistics, so I have the skills necessary to teach econometrics courses.

Additionally, I am passionate about coding and teaching students about not only theory but also applications; this would assist me with teaching econometrics and motivate me to introduce more coding-based classes into the school curriculum. I believe it is highly beneficial for students to graduate from economics programs with basic coding and forecasting skills. Having coding based classes taught by a woman professor would be impactful to women in economics courses. I would also appreciate the opportunity to teach introductory macroeconomics again, as I know it is beneficial for young women to have a female professor early in their studies. I look forward to refining my skills as an instructor and helping make economics a more accessible field.