

Teaching Philosophy

Teaching in economics and public policy should have three goals. The first goal is to engage and excite students about learning. A student who is invested in the course is more likely to not only want to learn the material but to actually learn the material. The second goal is to make material accessible to students regardless of their background. This requires understanding that students may enter the same program from vastly different educational, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds, and that effective teaching should be inclusive of those experiences. Finally, the third goal is to provide students with a set of transferable skills that they can apply not only in their work, but in their lives as citizens outside of this university. I take these goals seriously and believe they should shape both the design of a course and approaches taken to teach the course.

Engaging and Exciting Students. My undergraduate experience at Williams College was defined by professors who taught difficult subjects with a passion that made learning exciting even when the work itself was challenging. For example, my decision to pursue a Ph.D. in Economics was the result of an exceptional undergraduate Econometrics professor, who structured his course around a set of interesting and topical questions in education, environmental economics, and labor policy. Keeping students engaged requires both enthusiastic and energetic teaching, and a curriculum that teaches foundational material without losing sight of the bigger picture: the answer to “why should we care?” for every basic model or quantitative method. While every course is different, all courses should strive to encourage student participation and provide a variety of ways for students to interact with and think about the material.

Making Courses Accessible. Accessibility comes from both what we choose to teach and how we choose to teach it. Developing an inclusive and accessible curriculum requires selecting motivating examples that are relevant to students from a wide range of life experiences and avoiding making assumptions about which economics and policy contexts students may already be familiar with. Teaching an accessible course requires a cognizance about the level of ability students are entering the course with and an ability to adapt to their learning needs as necessary. While it is not always possible to tailor your teaching to the specific needs of every student, all courses can offer resources and additional materials for those students who need them, and advanced work for those students who seek that out.

Building Transferable Skills Teaching transferable skills is critical for training students to be productive and empathetic citizens of the world. In addition to teaching students the methods and concepts necessary for their public policy work, courses should emphasize the less technical skills, such as creative problem solving, thoughtful engagement with conflicting viewpoints, and critical thinking about “facts” that are often taken for granted. These skills are important for policy research, but also for engaging with the world in a thoughtful and productive manner. In my past teaching, I have emphasized teaching students *how* to arrive at an answer rather than just telling them the answer. I have found this approach to be especially important when teaching students data analysis skills, since the art of data analysis comes from developing a way of thinking rather than memorizing syntax and methods.

In the past four years, I have had the opportunity to serve as a teaching assistant for policy-relevant elective courses such as *Economics of Education*, *Economics of Discrimination*, and *Public Policy*, as well as technical courses such as *Data Analytics for Social Sciences* and a range of introductory coding courses as an undergraduate teaching assistant at Williams College. I have always aimed to teach with enthusiasm, tailor my teaching to students’ individual needs, and help students build

their problem-solving and critical thinking skills, which is reflected in my positive evaluations. By teaching certain courses (such as *Data Analytics for Social Sciences* and *Public Policy*) multiple times, I have also learned to adapt and adjust my teaching approach based on student feedback. For example, while some students have appreciated my approach of teaching students how to figure out an answer rather than simply providing them with the answer, others have remarked that they would have benefited from more direct instruction. I believe that good teaching can be learned if one has an openness to receive feedback and to grow, which is something I have always embraced. I care about being a good teacher because I owe much of who I am to the influence of good teachers. My investment in teaching well, combined with strong communication skills, creative problem-solving skills, enthusiasm, and social awareness will help me be effective professor.

Teaching Reviews

Below is a selection of my teaching reviews from *Data Analytics for Social Sciences*. This includes both positive and “mixed” reviews that I have learned and improved from during my repeated stints as a TA for this course. My full set of teaching evaluations are available upon request.

Data Analytics for Social Sciences (first time):

“Anjali Pai was a great instructional assistant during labs and was knowledgeable of the course material. She was very approachable and consistently made sure the students were understanding the material in the lab.”

Data Analytics for Social Sciences (second time):

“I came to Anjali’s section one time because I did not want to come to my assigned discussion section later in the day and ended up going to her discussion sections ever since. She is very energetic and fun to be around. She knows the material very well, but is careful to guide you to the answer without telling you the answer. Anjali clearly cares about the students and actively goes around the class to ask people if they have questions. She doesn’t stay at the front waiting for people to come to her, this is very helpful because sometimes students are afraid to ask questions or to go to the front to seek help. Her office hours are great because they’re very fast-paced, which makes it possible for all the students to get their questions answered. I would love to have her as a TA in other classes. 10/10.”

“Sometimes she would not give clear answers when asking a question about the material. I think the intention is for students to figure the material themselves, but sometimes, students don’t ask for help unless they really can’t figure it out for themselves, so potentially she can at least nudge in the right direction more”

“I really liked how she guided students to the answer of a question without outright giving them the answer. She also made sure that the students understood the reasoning behind the answer. My only suggestion is if she could review the homework assignments before students ask questions on them”

Data Analytics for Social Sciences (fifth time):

“Anjali was very helpful in discussion, and she communicated topics very clearly. She made it a priority to teach us, and not just give us answers”