

Teaching Statement

Samiha B. Tariq

PhD Candidate in Economics, Southern Illinois University Carbondale

samiha.bintetariq@siu.edu

My teaching begins with a conviction that has only grown stronger the longer I have worked: clarity is more powerful than complexity. Economics reaches students as something abstract and technical, when it is in fact a practical way of asking how people decide, how markets allocate, and why outcomes turn out as they do. My first task in any classroom is to build intuition, so that a student understands why a model is worth having before being asked to manipulate it. A student who knows what a model is for will use it; a student who has only learned its mechanics will forget it after the exam.

How I teach

I start from a situation and work backwards to the model. In Money and Banking, that meant beginning with how a bank's balance sheet constrains what it can lend, and only then introducing the money multiplier, so that the algebra arrived as the answer to a question students already had. In Microeconomic Theory II, a graduate course where proof-based reasoning is the obstacle for most students, I ran discussion sessions that paired each formal result with a visual or computational illustration. The aim was to make formalism feel like an instrument rather than a gate. Across four semesters as a teaching assistant, in Labor Problems (twice), Money and Banking, and Microeconomic Theory II, the comment I heard most often was that I made difficult questions easy to understand. It is the only review I have ever wanted.

Assessment follows the same logic. I use calibrated rubrics and publish solution keys, so that students can see precisely where reasoning succeeded or broke down rather than inferring it from a grade. Transparent standards are also a matter of fairness: students who arrive without the informal knowledge of how university courses work are the ones most disadvantaged when expectations stay implicit.

What teaching outside a classroom has taught me

For the past two years I have worked as Billing Administrator at the Evaluation and Developmental Center at SIUC, a unit serving adults and youth with disabilities. Almost every part of that role involves explaining something technical to an audience that does not share my vocabulary, and it has done more for my teaching than any amount of reflection on teaching itself would have.

I co-developed the curriculum for our Job Seeking Skills Training programme and trained the graduate assistants who deliver it. I also trained our case managers to write the monthly status reports that reach state counselors alongside the invoices I prepare. Those counselors read the reports and decide from them whether to approve the month's payment, so a report that fails to show what was actually done for a client costs the unit real money. Teaching experienced professionals a precise form of technical writing, without condescension and with a concrete reason it mattered, has been the most demanding instruction I have done. It also confirmed something I already believed about undergraduates: people learn a skill far faster once they can see what it is for. I deliver diversity and communication training twice a year to roughly thirty staff. I work directly with clients with disabilities, which has taught me more about pacing, patience and checking for understanding than any other experience I have had. And I regularly explain contract and financial matters to directors, state counselors, and university administrators, each of whom needs the same underlying facts framed differently.

One episode captures what I take from all of this. When a flood displaced our clients, the operational

problem was complicated and the discussion was going nowhere. What moved it was putting the cost of inaction in a single figure, roughly \$27,000 a month, after which the right decision became obvious to everyone in the room and we relocated within days. Good teaching does the same thing. It is rarely about adding detail. It is about finding the framing that makes an already-present structure visible.

What my research brings to the classroom

My job market paper asks whether pricing digital art requires black-box machine learning or whether legible, interpretable measures suffice. I found that interpretable measures do the work, and that the standard approach reports effects that are not there. That result is also a teaching commitment. I would rather students leave a course able to explain a modest result completely than able to run a sophisticated one they cannot interrogate. In courses with an empirical component I teach with open data and reproducible code, so that students finish having built something that runs and can be checked, and I use my own research to show them that a careful null is a finding rather than a failure.

Courses

I am prepared to teach Principles of Microeconomics and Macroeconomics, Intermediate Microeconomics, Money and Banking, Financial Markets and Institutions, Introductory Statistics and Econometrics, and Labor Economics. I would be glad to develop electives in empirical finance, digital asset markets, or the economics of art and cultural goods, drawing directly on my research. I am comfortable teaching face-to-face, hybrid and online, and I have prepared and delivered a full online teaching demonstration.

Inclusive practice

I set explicit norms for evidence-based discussion and for separating critique of an argument from critique of a person. I use structured participation, brief written reflections, think-pair-share, small-group problem solving and whole-class debriefs, because open-floor discussion consistently rewards the students who were already confident. As an international student myself, I am attentive to how much of a classroom's expectations go unstated, and I try to state them.

I would be glad to give a teaching demonstration at any stage of the search, in person or online, on a topic of the department's choosing. I find it is a far better basis for judgment than a statement like this one, and I would welcome the chance.