

## Teaching Statement

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Humans are natural-born social scientists: we live in a social world full of other agents with beliefs and desires of their own who make decisions that impact us; we naturally want to understand that world. In my teaching, I try to exploit this natural tendency in three ways.

First, I try to get students to see the economic problems that surround them for what they are. Of course, decisions about how much money to save for a rainy day or whether taxes are an efficient solution to negative externalities of production are economic questions. But so are questions like the following. Why would fast food restaurants offer a free meal if you don't get a receipt? Why would a drug smuggler pay pilots more than the pilots request to transport drugs?<sup>1</sup> How can a parent ensure that two children will fairly distribute the last piece of cake between them (and do so without her forcing the solution on them)?

Second, I use the classroom as a laboratory. The economic and decision sciences aren't just a collection of facts and theories. So I try to get the students to find the facts out, first hand. It is hard to get students to think economically about taxation policies as a solution to pollution costs by using the "chalk-and-talk" method. Yet it is easy and fun to get them thinking about the issues if you put them in an experimental scenario demonstrating that without taxation the market will produce to high a quantity and everyone in the simulated economy suffers, but implementing a tax on either the supply or demand-side nudges the market to equilibrium.

Third, I use the laboratory as a classroom. An important part of my overall teaching goal is outreach to underrepresented students. I was trained in Economics where there is a severe gender gap. I have a long range goal of using my classroom as a gateway to involving students in on-going research programs with the aim of mentoring underrepresented groups in the decision sciences.

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<sup>1</sup>Did you see *American Gangster*? Frank Lewis (played by Denzel Washington) did just that: he found out what his pilots were willing to accept, and paid them double that amount. Was he making some kind of mistake?

**Courses Taught** Since completing my degree at the University Arizona, I have taught at two universities: The University of Texas at Austin for one year and now the University of Michigan. At Texas, I taught several large introductory survey courses in microeconomics and an intermediate course in Experimental Economics (EE). At Michigan, I taught intermediate microeconomics, an intermediate course in Experimental Economics, and an advanced seminar focusing on EE for undergraduates and graduate students in Economics.

The Experimental Economics course focuses on students learning economic principles via in-class experiments. Students first participate in an experiment on a topic. Examples include competitive equilibrium, negative externalities, adverse selection, and labor markets. Using the data generated in-class from the students participating in a experiment, homework assignments focus on comparing the experimental results to the results predicted by a particular theory. Such an interactive approach requires students to think critically about the experimental design, form conclusions about how successful economic theory was in predicting the experimental outcomes, and in the end, hopefully have gained a better understanding of the theory. I challenge students to think beyond the experiments we conduct in class by requiring a short paper on an economic topic of interest to them. The students are asked to conduct a literature review and develop a unique experimental design to examine the topic they have chosen. This affords students an opportunity to learn about current and past research in an area of their interest, and to apply the tools of experimental economics they have learned in the course.

I organized the Seminar on Experimental Economics around three themes: laboratory methods and experimental design, data analysis, and past and current research in EE. In addition to the standard-format lectures/discussions, the class meet weekly to attend the seminar series I organized through the Research Center for Group Dynamics. The goal was to both provide concrete examples of how the material we were covering in class gets applied and to expose students to cutting-edge experimental research in-progress. The students read drafts of the to-be-presented papers ahead of time, wrote referee reports on them, and met with each speaker following the talk. We had such prominent economists as John List (Chicago), Rachel Croson (Wharton), Dan Houser (GMU), Tim Cason (Purdue), among others. Although this was a lot of work — both for me and the students — it was also a great success, and was my most rewarding teaching experience to date.

I am especially eager to develop and teach courses on Economics and Psychology, Mechanism Design, Economics of Gender, and Gender and Negotiations.

**Mentoring Underrepresented Students** As a female in a predominantly male field, I strive to mentor young women. I have written a grant proposal with Alessandra Cassar at the University of San Francisco that aims to mentor undergraduates in economics from historically underrepresented groups in the profession — primarily women — for hands-on participation in experimental research, mentoring, and professional guidance. Research has indicated this can be a very successful form of mentoring. Students would participate as research assistants, directly assisting in designing and running experimental sessions and conducting data analysis. Throughout the program students would be encouraged to apply the skills they gain by developing their own independent research projects. At the end of the year, the entire group would meet for a one day conference featuring a presentation of the completed research, mentoring activities, and a keynote by a major figure in the field. Our overall goal is take positive action to increase the number of women who further their career in Economics. More information about the project, Mentoring Underrepresented Students through Experiments (Project MUSE), is available on my webpage.

**Professional Development** I was a participant in the Teaching Innovations Program in Economics, sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the American Economic Association. The program was a several day workshop in 2007 for college and university economics instructors to promote effective teaching strategies. The goal was to aid instructors in introducing interactive teaching and learning into courses. I learned new methods for the classroom that will assist in further fostering an environment of intellectual enthusiasm.

**Dissertation Committees** I have actively served on three dissertation committees at Michigan across several disciplines: Tapan Khopar (School of Information), Doug Smith (Economics), and Adam Levine (Political Science). Both Doug and Adam are involved in current research projects with me.

## Student Evaluations at Michigan

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### Fall 2006: Current Issues in Economics - Experimental Economics<sup>2</sup>

- *Overall, this was an excellent course:* 4.86
- *Overall, the instructor was an excellent teacher:* 4.86
- *I learned a great deal from this course:* 4.72
- *The instructor seemed to enjoy teaching:* 4.96
- enrollment: 17

### Winter 2006: Experimental Economics

- *Overall, this was an excellent course:* 4.00
- *Overall, the instructor was an excellent teacher:* 4.07
- enrollment: 70

### Fall 2005: Intermediate Microeconomics

- *Overall, the instructor was an excellent teacher:* 4.19
- enrollment: 29

### Winter 2005: Experimental Economics

- *Overall, this was an excellent course:* 4.11
- *Overall, the instructor was an excellent teacher:* 4.16
- enrollment: 70

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<sup>2</sup>All of the measures are on a 5.00 scale.