

## TEACHING STATEMENT

During my time as a graduate student at the European University Institute (EUI), I was the teaching assistant for the International Economics course taught by Prof. Giampiero Gallo for two semesters at New York University (NYU).<sup>1</sup> Additionally, I followed a training on teaching techniques in Higher Education at the EUI. Based on these experiences, as well as of course having been a student for many years myself, I believe that the key to effective teaching is to create the right environment for learning and design courses with specific objectives in mind. A teaching environment should be engaging and inclusive; courses should foster curiosity and scientific thinking among students.

With this philosophy in mind, I would be comfortable with teaching undergraduate or graduate level core courses in microeconomics, introductory classes in econometrics and macroeconomics, as well as topical courses on political economy and development. Such topical courses on an undergraduate level could for example cover the fundamentals of the field, addressing economic approach to conflict, the greed and grievance debate, and potentially the connections between international economics, trade (addressing the Stolper–Samuelson theorem) and development. On a graduate level I would incorporate theoretical models of development and growth, and address recent developments in the literature.

I consider student engagement to be at the core of learning. Student engagement can be increased by fostering interest in the topic being taught, as well as allowing students the space to work with the material by themselves to gain deeper understanding and insights. Fostering interest can be done by, for example, connecting sometimes seemingly abstract and obscure concepts or equations to real life scenarios, helping students to see a bigger picture. Importantly, student engagement is often only possible when students feel comfortable and have the opportunity to ask questions and actively participate in discussions, whatever their level of understanding or previous experience with the topic at hand. Coming from a non-economic background myself (I studied communications as an undergraduate student), I experienced how intimidating and complex economic principles and concepts – especially the mathematical ones – can be to students. This shaped my approach and views on teaching in many ways, and enables me to understand where potential issues and challenges can arise. I learned to break down potentially complex matters in order to explain, discuss them, and show where they fit into a larger picture – without omitting details or oversimplifying the material.

Ensuring the course material is accessible to students of many different levels and backgrounds does not only foster engagement, but creates deeper understanding of the topic at hand and encourages students to engage in critical thinking. Personally, I consider critical independent thinking to be one of the most important skills students learn at university. The framework we have in economics is well suited to

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<sup>1</sup>Prof. Giampiero Gallo can be contacted via email, at [giampiero.gallo@gmail.com](mailto:giampiero.gallo@gmail.com), as an additional reference with respect to teaching.

critical thinking once students understand how to apply the theory to reality. One way to challenge students to engage with the course's material is through problem sets and case studies. These are often the best ways to help students realize, first, that most problems are, in fact, modifications of a baseline model, and second, that using an economic intuition to approach the novelty embedded in each problem guides them toward the answers.

Additionally, such projects give students the opportunity to work together and learn from each other. As much as my professors have taught me, I have possibly learned equally as much from my classmates. Since critical discussion and cooperation is at the core of research and academia, it is important to also give students opportunities to learn the skills needed to navigate these matters and that foster group interaction.

Finally, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the teaching style and techniques are in tune with the needs of the classroom. After all, the teaching outcome depends greatly on the quality of the class-instructor, student-instructor and peer-to-peer interactions. My goal is always to collaborate with students to create a relaxed and stress-free atmosphere where they feel comfortable to ask questions and actively participate in discussions. Based on the feedback I receive from that process, I adapt my teaching strategies to meet the dynamic needs of the classroom. For example, during my time as a teaching assistant at NYU for Prof. Giampiero Gallo, we faced the challenge of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring us to adapt the curriculum, teaching style and set-up. But most importantly, I proactively reached out to our students to assess their needs and understand where potential difficulties may arise, as to support them where necessary and ensure the best possible learning outcomes.

Of course, I still have much to learn about being an effective teacher and educator. To continue to grow as a teacher myself, I actively seek feedback from students and colleagues. I also use student assessments and evaluations to guide my teaching. Possessing a reflective attitude, open mindedness, and maintaining flexibility in my teaching enables me to be responsive to students, providing them with the environment they need to develop, be comfortable, and grow as economists and individuals.