

Teaching Portfolio

Jason Jones

There are two questions I ask myself before preparing to teach any undergraduate course. Why is this course relevant to my students? How will this course help my students critically assess those things they hear, read, and see in public debate, the press, and the classroom¹? I then structure the course to highlight why the subject matter is relevant and give students opportunities to apply the theory to real world situations in an active learning environment. A teaching experience in which the student leaves my class able to use the knowledge and economic logic gained to articulate strong and theoretically sound arguments is deemed successful.

I have had a number of independent teaching opportunities as a graduate student at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill; including three semesters of Introductory Statistics and two semesters of Intermediate Macroeconomics. I have taught recitation sessions for the first year graduate Econometric sequence and an introductory economics course. I was also the TA for an Advanced Mathematics/Macroeconomics course at the AEA Minority Scholarship Program held at Duke University. I received formal training through the teacher training program facilitated by Professor Michael Salemi. I also participated in the future faculty fellowship program, a week long seminar centered on teaching and researching skills.

My experience and training has shown that in order for the teaching experience to be successful I must convey enthusiasm for the material, make the material relevant to the students, and design the course so students are actively engaged in the learning process. This process begins on the first day of class when I make my expectations of the students clear in my introduction to the course and in the class syllabus (Appendix A). I also insure that on the first day of class we discuss something from the news. For example in my Statistics class we discussed a student newspaper survey about drug use on campus. In this way students can begin to see how the subject matter is relevant to them. During the discussion I do not ask for volunteers, instead I ask students by name for their opinions. By doing this, I demonstrate that they will not be just passive participants in my class.

Such active learning strategies are used throughout the semester to continually bring relevance to the concepts introduced in class. I continually bring up world events or opinion polls for discussion in class. For example, our discussion of open economy models in Macroeconomics coincided with an economically driven political crisis in Hungary. We used this example to evaluate what had happened and what could happen to this country if its deficits persisted. My exams often have questions that reflect the current events or polls we have used in class, requiring the students to demonstrate that they can relate the concepts to current events (Appendix B has a sample exam).

The established environment of open participation in the classroom has helped me use active learning strategies to help students grasp complex concepts. Once a student has successfully explained a concept he or she is much more likely to remember it in the

¹ For graduate courses I would focus more on how to help students gain the technical skills to understand published academic work and then to be able to critique and expand on those ideas.

future. Often I would have students break into groups in the middle of class and assign each group a particular problem. After they solved this problem as a group, one member was chosen to present the solution to the rest of the class. On an unofficial class evaluation over a third of those surveyed mentioned the effectiveness of these board activities.

Relevance and application goes beyond the examples I present in class. In each of my classes students have been given assignments which make them apply what is taught in class to the world around them and their interests. In Macroeconomics they are assigned to find articles in the popular press as well as blogs (Appendix C). They must then frame the author's economic arguments into the models we discussed in class. This allows the students to see how models are used in economic logic, but is also teaches them how to have a critical eye. My Statistics students are required to construct their own small experiment and use the statistical tools learned in class to answer a question of their own curiosity (Appendix D). This assignment provided a range of tests from the humorous ("Am I being short changed on my favorite flavor in a Skittles bag?") to the serious ("Does the older generation support the return of the draft more than younger?"). One student commented that the "Writing assignments were a good idea. [They] helped give real world application in a usually theory based class".

I also find that my enthusiasm and personal experience helps students further grasp the relevance of the subject matter and also increases their interest. I consistently scored above the department average on class evaluations on overall course/instructor characteristics including showing enthusiasm for the subject matter. I convey my enthusiasm for the material by highlighting areas where there still remains questions and arguments in the economics profession. I also bring in examples from my own research of current applications of the theories and techniques we discuss. In my classes I show models from my current research, which explores the ongoing monetary unification in Europe, as well as teach from my experience of living abroad in Hungary for two years. This has provided me a number of opportunities to talk to students outside of class about their questions in related courses, their experiences abroad, and their educational goals.

My teaching experiences have been positive for both me and my students. I was awarded the 'Outstanding Economics Department Teaching Fellow' for the 2006/2007 academic year. This honor is awarded by the undergraduate Economics Club and is based on a voluntary student ballot. The award is granted once a year and reflects the student's overall learning experience in a particular class. I have consistently scored high on student evaluation. Over my six independent teaching experiences the average overall assessment score for my courses was 4.05 out of 5 (the average for my Macroeconomic courses was a 4.25) while the department's average score for all of its courses over the same period was 3.83. When students were asked to evaluate the course/instructor characteristics my average score was 4.2 compared to the department average of 4 over the same period (Appendix E has a summary of my course evaluations). My most satisfying feedback came from students who had positive learning experiences, such as this one from Fall 2006; "While this was only my first semester, Jason Jones is by far my best instructor in any course and helped me become excited about the subject and enlightened my mind." (Appendix F has a summary of all student responses).

A complete set of documentation can be found and www.unc.edu/~jonesjc/

Appendix A: Syllabus

INTERMEDIATE THEORY: MONEY, INCOME, AND EMPLOYMENT

Spring, 2007

M/W/F 9:00-9:50, Gardner 106

Jason Jones

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Hours: Wednesday 4:00 – 5:30, Friday 10:00-11:30

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Course Prerequisite and Credit:

Students must have taken Econ 10 and the equivalent to Math 152 (22). Econ 420 is a requirement for all Econ majors and is designed for econ majors.

Course Goals:

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Construct economic cause and effect based on models and economic intuition.
2. Critically assess and understand macroeconomic arguments, particularly those reported in the popular press and on the internet.
3. Have a base understanding of some of the different schools of thought used to explain macroeconomic behavior.

Class discussion will center on the needed models and intuition (with emphasis on the Keynesian model) to understand and explain macroeconomic movements. We will focus on cause and effect and how our models relate to current economic events. Class discussion will also center on how theory still allows for differing opinions, and we will critically assess economic articles from newspapers, magazines, and online blogs.

Required Text:

Mankiw, Gregory N. Macroeconomics 6th ed. New York, NY: Worth Publishers, 2007.

Homework/Assignments:

There will be four homework assignments and three written assignments. Homework is for your benefit in preparing for exams and participating in class discussions. Answer keys will be posted on my web page directly after class on the day it is due. Working together on these assignments is encouraged, but copying is unacceptable. They will not be graded, but credit will be given for completing the assignment. The purpose of the homework is to allow you to practice the concepts discussed in class and in the book. It is an indication of what type of problem I expect you be able to do and is indicative of what you will see on the exam. Homework is due the last class before the exam.

Three written assignments will also be turned in. These are to be original works and researched independently. Their purpose is to show that you can apply the models learned in class to current events and economic arguments.

Exam schedule:

Exam 1: Friday, February 2nd
Exam 2: Monday, February 26th
Exam 3: Friday, March 23rd
Exam 4: Friday, April 20th
Final: Friday, May 4th - 8:00 A.M.

Grades:

There are 100 points possible in this course;
Assignments: 21 points (7 points each)
Homework: 4 points
Exams: 40 (10 points each)
Final: 35 points

There will be no make up exams. If it is beneficial to you, one of your exam scores will be dropped and the weight of that exam will be put on the final (e.g. If you miss one exam your exams are worth 30 total points and your final will be worth 45 total points). If you miss an exam for any reason (I don't need to know why) then that exam will be dropped and the weight will be put on the final. You may only miss one exam and have this happen. The second one missed will be recorded as a zero.

There will be no makeup final unless you have an official excuse signed by your dean. Exams will be closed book and closed notes. Calculators are allowed. Students who would like a graded exam question reviewed must submit in writing a note explaining why a review is warranted. The honor code is in effect on all exams.

Enrollment:

Exams will not be graded or handed back until a student has enrolled in the course.

Class Content:

We will cover the material found in the textbook for

Chapters 1-6
Chapters 9-15
Chapter 19
Chapters 7-8

In that order.

Appendix B – Sample Exam

Econ 400 Summer 2007 Exam 3

Show all of your work. Partial credit will be awarded if I can tell what you are doing. Answer all the questions. The honor code is in effect. This exam counts for a total of 12 points. Points are awarded as stated on each problem. If you cannot complete the first part of question make up an answer and answer the following questions.

1. (2 points) In 1987 Gallup Poll asked 100 people and again in 2007 another 100 people the following question: “If your party were to nominate a well qualified candidate who happened to be a woman would you vote for her?” In 1987 82 said they would and in 2007 89 said they would.
 - a. (1/2 point) You are interested in whether or not the proportion of people who would vote for a women president has gotten bigger in the last 20 years. What would be your null and alternative hypothesis?

 - b. (1 point) Test this hypothesis at a 0.01 confidence level, by stating the t/z observed, t/z critical, and whether you reject or fail to reject the null.

 - c. (1/2 point) Explain in words what your conclusion in part b means (graded on correctness).

3. cont.

- b. (1 point) Test your hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance by stating the t/z observed, t/z critical, and whether you reject or fail to reject the null.

- 4. (2 points) A sample of 6 African countries shows an average inequality index of 54.6 with a standard deviation of 1 while a sample of 6 Latin American countries shows an inequality index of 53.7 with a standard deviation of 1. (note a higher number means more unequal)

- a. (1/2 point) If you wanted to know if Latin American countries have a different inequality index than African countries what would be your null and alternative hypothesis?

- b. (1 point) Test your hypothesis at a .1 level of significance by stating the t/z observed, t/z critical, and whether you reject or fail to reject the null.

- c. (1/2 point) Explain in words (related to the question asked) what your result is.

Appendix C: Macroeconomic Writing Assignment

Writing Assignment Spring 2007

Through the course of the semester we will discuss a number of macroeconomic concepts and models that are commonly used in the popular media, including online blogs. This assignment is designed to help you to see how the concepts and models presented in this course are relevant to current news and debate. In your papers, you will relate what is being presented and discussed in the popular press to what we have learned in class. You may just find that some of what you read does not reflect what was presented in class. This assignment should also help you learn how to formulate an opinion (or critic another's) using economic logic and models.

As the semester goes along you are to find **three** articles, opinion pieces, or blogs that discuss, use, or contradict a topic we have discussed in class. Write a 2 to 3 page paper for each article in which you summarize the article, relate it to class, and discuss the conclusions of the article. Grades will be assigned as follows:

_____ 1 pt – Turn in with article attached

_____ 1 pt – Grammar, spelling, and readability

_____ 5 pt – Content

_____ 1pt – Summary of article

_____ 1 pt – Correctly relate article's arguments to topics presented in the course

_____ 1 pt - Correctly explain the model or idea used from class

_____ 1 pt – Relate article to all relevant topic discussed in class up to the point the paper is turned in.

_____ 1 pt – A conclusion in which you discuss the merits of the author's argument based on the models you have presented.

It is to your advantage to complete some articles earlier in the semester, as there is less material to cover in order to get full credit. For example, if you write on an article having to do with government budget deficit after the first section of class you only need to use the classical model. If you turn in the assignment after the second section, you need to talk about the Classical and Keynesian model. If you wait until the end of the semester you will need to include Classical, Keynesian, and Ricardian explanations in your paper to get full credit.

Appendix D: Statistics Writing Assignment

Writing Assignment – Summer 2007

DO NOT gather any data until I have returned part 1 of the assignment. This assignment is designed to have you use the material learned in class in an original way. You should follow these basic steps:

1. State a hypothesis that you are interested in studying
2. Design an experiment to test this hypothesis
3. Obtain a sample of at least 30 observations
4. Test you hypothesis

Part 1: DUE: June 1st – No assignment will be accepted if Part 1 has not been completed

Write one to two paragraphs where you explain exactly how you will run your experiment. If you are asking a question I must know the exact question. If you are measuring something I must know exactly how you will measure it. Include at the bottom of this assignment the pledge that is attached to page 2.

Part 2: DUE: June 14th - You will turn in a 3 to 5 page research report which will contain the following information. Note: You will lose five points if the STATA output is not attached!

1. Introduction - including your hypothesis and background on why you think this is an interesting question to ask.
2. Data summary - including how the information was gathered, what the sample size is, and summary and graphical representations of your data.
3. Hypothesis test - explain what statistical tool you used and what the statistics say about your hypothesis. Include a narrative of what these results may mean. Attach your STATA output as an appendix!

This assignment is loosely structured on purpose. I want you to look into anything you feel like looking into whether goofy or serious. Using and interpreting the correct statistics should be your main worry and not the results necessarily.

Grades will be assigned as follows

- ___ Introduction
 - ___ Clarity of hypothesis, general write up (1 point)
- ___ Data Summary
 - ___ How it was gathered (1 point)
 - ___ Summary statistics (1 point)
 - ___ Graphics (1 point)
- ___ Hypothesis Test
 - ___ Used and explained correct tool (2 points)
 - ___ Correct interpretation of results (2 points)
 - ___ Narrative (1 point)
- ___ Neatness, spelling, grammar, clarity (1 point)

Appendix E: Evaluation Averages over Six Courses

Question:	Statistics	Macro-economics	Total Average	Department Average
Overall Assessment	3.95	4.25	4.05	3.83
Course/Instructor Characteristics	4.15	4.3	4.2	4.0
Overall, considering its content, design, and, and structure, this course was excellent	3.825	4.15	3.99	3.63
Overall, considering the constraints and opportunities inherent in the subject matter, this instructor was an effective teacher	4.075	4.4	4.24	3.92
Overall, I learned a great deal from this course	3.925	4.3	4.11	3.92
This course challenged me to think deeply about the subject matter	3.975	4.3	4.14	3.97
The instructor clearly communicated what was expected of me in this class	4.25	4.4	4.325	3.97
I was able to get individual help when I needed it	4.35	4.4	4.375	4.08
The course materials helped me better understand the subject matter	3.775	4.2	3.99	3.8
The course assignments helped me better understand the subject matter	4	4.35	4.175	3.98
The instructor evaluated my work fairly	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.13
The instructor seemed concerned about whether students learned the material	4.2	4.25	4.225	4.02
The instructor expressed ideas clearly	4.025	4.2	4.11	4.0
The instructor showed enthusiasm for the subject matter in this course	4.25	4.6	4.425	4.23
The instructor showed enthusiasm for teaching in this course	4.35	4.55	4.45	4.22
The instructor treated all students with respect	4.55	4.6	4.575	4.32
The instructional techniques engaged me with the subject	4.025	3.9	3.96	3.67
The instructor provided me with helpful feedback on my performance	3.85	3.9	3.875	3.62
The instructor handled questions well	4.05	4.25	4.15	4
The instructor used examples that had relevance for me	4.125	4.25	4.19	4.03
The instructor used class time well	4.175	4.3	4.24	4.025
The instructor effectively encouraged students to participate in this class	4.075	4.15	4.12	3.77
The course was designed to keep me engaged in learning	3.95	4.05	4	3.73
The workload was appropriate for what I gained from this class	4.05	4.2	4.125	3.78

The instructor is one of the best I have had at UNC, fully deserving of a teaching award – Yes 59
No 59

Appendix F: Student Comments from Course Evaluations

Intermediate Macroeconomics:

Spring 2007:

- “Very enthusiastic about the course – always seemed interested in the subject matter.”
- “Excellent class, excellent teacher – entertaining, but very good at explaining things.”
- “I really feel that the only reason I didn’t gain a lot from this class was not because of the instructor’s ability but my effort. I believe that the instructor is very effective and I would have gained a lot more had I put in the time.”
- “Best Econ teacher I have ever had.”
- “Best Econ professor I have had at UNC.”
- “Not the best is could be, but pretty darn good. I would recommend this teacher to anyone.”

Fall 2006:

- “Writing assignments were a good idea. Helped give real world application to a usually theoretic based class.”
- “While this was only my first semester, Jason Jones is by far my best instructor in any course and helped me become excited about the subject and enlightened my mind.”
- “I have never filled out “strongly agrees” for everything before but Jason was truly one of the best teachers I have ever had. He was able to clearly communicate the concepts to us and make what would be a challenging course a fairly easy one.”
- “I thought this course was very challenging, but well worth the extra work. Mr. Jones did a fantastic job of explaining difficult points and was always available for extra help outside of class. By far the best economics class I’ve ever taken.”

Introductory Statistics:

Summer 2007:

- “Jason was a great teacher, made a dull subject interesting”
- “Great teacher! Nothing negative to say. Would take class with him again and again”
- “He is a very good teacher. He’s funny, engaging, and smart. I wouldn’t change a single thing. I learned a lot.”
- “Good man, especially for a grad student teaching this class.”

Summer 2005:

- “Best: Instructional techniques, STATA assignment; Worst: Daily homework assignments were not graded”
- “Great job teaching the course, was really efficient and effective”
- “Jason did a great job. The powerpoint lectures helped especially if you missed a day. The workload was a little much. I would have rather have seen more “critical thinking” problems that were closely related to the exams”
- “A little more exciting presentations. But the instructor always was prepared to answer questions and help students”
- “One of the best TAs I’ve had yet. Taught subject very well.”
- “My favorite Stat class to date.”
- “Perhaps application of economic theory – maybe in the form of additional out-of-class assignments – might make this material more helpful in applying these statistical models to generate a better overall understanding of economics in general.”

Fall 2004:

- “Jason is the best teacher I have had at UNC, and is the only teacher I’ve ever recommended for a teaching award. He held extended office hours on test days and at times would tutor me for hours outside of class even though he did not have to. He also did an excellent job of conveying course material and created an enjoyable environment which was very conducive for learning.”
- “Mr. Jones was a wonderful teacher. He explained things in terms we could understand and never made anyone feel stupid for asking questions.”
- “Best Econ Prof. I’ve had!”
- “Just continue to do what you do and you’ll do well” “
- “Jason is not an effective teacher”
- “His clear ways of expressing what we need to learn was great”

Summer 2004:

- “Overall Jason was a good teacher, for his first time in a tough subject.”