

# **Teaching Portfolio**

Nathan Fiala

1. Teaching philosophy
2. Teaching interests and experience
3. Summary of teaching evaluations

## Teaching Philosophy

Nathan Fiala

It is my view that effective teaching must strike a balance between requiring students to independently pursue knowledge in order to gain the skills necessary to learn on their own and providing students with all of the resources and assistance necessary to guide them in learning. In my experience as a teaching assistant at UC Irvine, I have always made an effort to provide clear explanations. Since students often come with different skill sets and experience levels, I find that starting with basic concepts and successively building upon them provides students with a strong foundation to then understand more complex concepts and problems.

It is important to me to be friendly and approachable with students so that they can feel comfortable coming to me with questions. I make myself available to students to meet and discuss any questions and concerns they have. In addition to teaching students the material for the course, I believe it is important to be clear on exactly what I require of students. I try to always provide students with clear guidelines of what I expect from them and what aspects I will focus on when evaluating their work. I believe that when I make my expectations clear and provide students with all of the resources necessary to meet those expectations then I put my students in a position to succeed. On the other hand, I have a tough stance on academic dishonesty. I always make an effort to grade consistently and fairly.

Students can easily become entirely focused on their grades and lose track of the ultimate goal of mastering material and understanding its relevance and application to real-life scenarios. Whenever I teach, I have two main goals in mind. First, I want students to understand the main body of knowledge and master the fundamental skills and tools for economic analysis. Second, I want students to be able to apply tools and concepts to real-life scenarios. To achieve these goals, I try to assign students work that consists of problem sets on standard material as well as questions or projects that make students aware of the applications of economics.

I am always excited to have students who are interested in the theoretical application and broader views of economics, though in my experience few students will pursue higher levels of economic training. I therefore teach to the application of economics, while offering many opportunities to develop a deeper theoretical understanding of the material. When teaching a class, I believe it is important to provide opportunities for motivated students to pursue their interests further.

## Teaching Interests and Experience

Nathan Fiala

I was a teaching assistant at the University of California, Irvine for the following courses:

- Basic Economics II (Winter 2005, Spring 2005)
- Game Theory
- Business Decisions
- International Money
- Business and Government

I am most interested in developing and teaching the following courses:

- Basic Economics (undergraduate)
- Game Theory (undergraduate, graduate)
- Intermediate Microeconomics (undergraduate, graduate)
- Development Economics (undergraduate, graduate)
- Political Economy (undergraduate, graduate)
- Applied Econometrics (undergraduate, graduate)

In addition to the courses listed above, I am interested in teaching a variety of courses at the undergraduate and/or the graduate level, including special topics courses within development economics, political economy and applied microeconomics.

## Summary of Teaching Evaluations

Nathan Fiala

Before working with the World Bank as a consultant (Summer 2007 to present), I was fortunate enough to serve as a teaching assistant for five courses from Winter 2005 through Spring 2007. I was responsible for teaching multiple sections per week, being available to students through email and office hours, grading assignments and exams, proctoring midterms and finals and providing additional review materials and review sessions outside of regular class time.

Teaching evaluations are based upon a 7-point scale, where 7 is the highest possible. The numbers in parenthesis indicate average scores for all other social science courses that quarter.

Evaluation measures	Basic Economics II	Game Theory
	Winter 2005, n=13	Fall 2005, n=38
General teaching effectiveness	5.67 (5.51)	5.53 (5.39)
Competence in course material	5.75 (5.68)	5.66 (5.59)
Able to make presentations clearly	5.77 (5.50)	5.47 (5.34)
Was responsive to students	6.62 (5.84)	5.61 (5.76)
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	Business Decisions	International Money
	Winter 2006, n=40	Spring 2006, n=11
General teaching effectiveness	4.47 (5.41)	5.18 (5.43)
Competence in course material	4.53 (5.61)	5.27 (5.61)
Able to make presentations clearly	5.03 (5.36)	5.00 (5.45)
Was responsive to students	5.00 (5.77)	5.18 (5.78)

In addition to these four courses, I also served as a teaching assistant for the business school for the class Business and Government, which did not ask the students for a teaching evaluation.

The extent to which teaching assistants are free to design the structure and material covered in sections is determined by the professor in charge of the course. In Winter and Fall 2005, I was given more freedom in how I chose to teach my sections. For example, in Basic Economics II, Winter 2005, I was given the responsibility of leading students in an economic analysis paper of their choosing and could decide how I wanted to guide students on this project and set guidelines for grading. Likewise, in Game Theory I was given the opportunity to work with students on developing knowledge of more complicated games than were presented in class. I believe that the higher scores that I received in these two courses more accurately illustrate my personal teaching abilities.

The full summaries for each course (compiled by UC Irvine) are shown below. The full enrollment numbers and the evaluation responses differ because the former refers to all students enrolled in the course and the latter refers to the number of students who chose to fill out an evaluation among those that attended the sections that I specifically taught.

These evaluations were filled out in class, so these numbers may also differ by attendance requirements.

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE TA COURSE EVALUATION SUMMARY**

Teaching Assistant: Fiala, Nathan  
 Course: 20B BASIC ECONOMICS II  
 Course Code: 62050  
 Enrollment: 141  
 Winter, 2005

TENDENCE:	Never	Once	2 or 3 time	4 or 5 times	6 or 7 times	8 times	more than 8 times
How often did you attend discussion sections?	0	0	0	0	3	3	7
How often did you meet with the TA, outside of the section time, to discuss the course material?	4	4	4	0	0	0	0

PRESENTATION:	This Course			All Other Social Science Courses			NA	Among Worst			OK			Among Best	
	mean	s.d.	item n	mean	s.d.	item n									
TA was competent in course material	5.75	1.01	12	5.68	1.36	6,292	1	0	0	0	2	2	5	3	
TA was able to make presentations clearly:	5.77	0.97	13	5.50	1.54	6,242	0	0	0	0	2	2	6	3	
TA was responsive to students:	6.62	0.62	13	5.84	1.41	6,305	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	9	
. . . was able to integrate the lecture and discussion material:	5.92	0.92	13	5.70	1.46	6,109	0	0	0	0	1	3	5	4	
TA was present and on time for discussion sections/office hours:	4.58	1.75	12	6.07	1.32	6,021	1	0	3	0	2	3	2	2	
The discussion sections were useful to the success of the course:	5.58	1.44	12	5.43	1.75	6,016	1	0	1	0	1	3	3	4	
<b>I would expect another course with this TA to be:</b>	<b>5.92</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5.56</b>	<b>1.56</b>	<b>6,188</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>EFFECTIVENESS:</b>															
<b>general teaching effectiveness</b>	<b>5.67</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5.51</b>	<b>1.44</b>	<b>6,419</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE TA COURSE EVALUATION SUMMARY**

Teaching Assistant: Fiala, Nathan  
 Course: 109 GAME THEORY  
 Course Code: 62155  
 Enrollment: 53  
 Fall, 2005

ATTENDANCE:	Never	Once	2 or 3 time	4 or 5 times	6 or 7 times	8 times	more than 8 times
How often did you attend discussion sections?	0	0	0	3	10	3	22
How often did you meet with the TA, outside of the section time, to discuss the course material?	23	7	4	0	2	0	2

	This Course			All Other Social Science Courses			NA	Among Worst		OK		Among Best	
	mean	s.d.	item n	mean	s.d.	item n							
<b>PRESENTATION:</b>													
TA was competent in course material	5.66	1.38	38	5.59	1.40	6,459	0	0	2	0	6	7	9 14
TA was able to make presentations clearly.	5.47	1.62	38	5.34	1.62	6,358	0	2	1	0	7	4	12 12
TA was responsive to students:	5.61	1.41	38	5.76	1.49	6,497	0	1	1	1	3	8	13 11
TA was able to integrate the lecture and discussion material:	5.68	1.57	38	5.51	1.59	6,216	0	2	1	0	3	6	12 14
TA was present and on time for discussion sections/office hours:	5.76	1.38	37	6.14	1.26	6,217	1	1	0	1	4	8	8 15
The discussion sections were useful to the success of the course:	5.19	1.77	37	5.24	1.83	6,082	1	1	4	2	4	6	9 11
I would expect another course with this TA to be:	5.50	1.46	36	5.45	1.61	6,372	2	0	3	1	3	7	12 10
<b>EFFECTIVENESS:</b>													
general teaching effectiveness	5.53	1.31	38	5.39	1.49	6,658	0	0	1	2	6	6	13 10

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE TA COURSE EVALUATION SUMMARY**

Teaching Assistant: Fiala, Nathan  
 Course: 138 BUSINESS DECISIONS  
 Course Code: 69340  
 Enrollment 244  
 Winter, 2006

TRENDENCE:	Never	Once	2 or 3 time	4 or 5 times	6 or 7 times	8 times	more than 8 times
How often did you attend discussion sections?	0	2	4	7	7	8	13
How often did you meet with the TA, outside of the section time, to discuss the course material?	28	6	3	2	1	1	0

	This Course			All Other Social Science Courses			NA	Among Worst			OK			Among Best	
	mean	s.d.	item n	mean	s.d.	item n									
<b>PRESENTATION:</b>															
TA was competent in course material:	4.53	1.48	38	5.61	1.39	5,798	3	1	3	5	9	9	8	3	
TA was able to make presentations clearly:	5.03	1.37	40	5.36	1.60	5,736	1	0	3	1	9	13	7	7	
TA was responsive to students:	5.00	1.50	40	5.77	1.46	5,845	1	1	2	4	5	11	11	6	
. was able to integrate the lecture and discussion material:	4.68	1.66	40	5.58	1.54	5,633	1	3	2	2	11	7	10	5	
TA was present and on time for discussion sections/office hours:	5.49	1.55	37	6.10	1.32	5,588	4	1	2	0	6	6	10	12	
The discussion sections were useful to the success of the course:	3.90	1.78	39	5.32	1.79	5,474	2	6	3	6	9	6	7	2	
I would expect another course with this TA to be:	4.42	1.68	38	5.46	1.61	5,723	3	3	3	4	8	8	9	3	
<b>EFFECTIVENESS:</b>															
general teaching effectiveness	4.47	1.32	40	5.41	1.48	5,957	1	1	3	3	13	10	9	1	

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE TA COURSE EVALUATION SUMMARY**

Teaching Assistant: Fiala, Nathan  
 Course: 161B INTERNATIONAL MONEY  
 Course Code: 62277  
 Enrollment: 30  
 Spring, 2006

ATTENDENCE:	Never	Once	2 or 3 time	4 or 5 times	6 or 7 times	8 times	more than 8 times
How often did you attend discussion sections?	2	5	1	1	1	0	1
How often did you meet with the TA, outside of the section time, to discuss the course material?	8	1	2	0	0	0	0

	This Course			All Other Social Science Courses			NA	Among Worst	OK	Among Best
	mean	s.d.	item n	mean	s.d.	item n				
<b>PRESENTATION:</b>										
TA was competent in course material:	5.27	1.35	11	5.61	1.39	5,924	0	0 0	1 3	2 3
TA was able to make presentations clearly:	5.00	1.54	11	5.45	1.56	5,902	0	0 1	1 1	5 0 3
TA was responsive to students:	5.18	1.34	11	5.78	1.42	5,932	0	0 0	1 3	3 1 3
TA was able to integrate the lecture and discussion material:	5.30	1.35	10	5.64	1.49	5,752	1	0 0	1 2	3 1 3
TA was present and on time for discussion sections/office hours:	5.55	1.37	11	6.08	1.30	5,643	0	0 0	1 2	2 2 4
The discussion sections were useful to the success of the course:	4.90	1.45	10	5.36	1.79	5,573	1	0 0	1 5	1 0 3
I would expect another course with this TA to be:	5.18	1.34	11	5.49	1.59	5,825	0	0 0	1 3	3 1 3
<b>EFFECTIVENESS:</b>										
general teaching effectiveness	5.18	1.27	11	5.43	1.49	6,106	0	0 0	1 3	2 3 2