

TEACHING STATEMENT

Ylenia Brillì *

Economics, as a discipline, is concerned with applying theoretical concepts to real-life situations. An approach to teaching that focuses on how to make links between economic theories and observed empirical evidence is essential for the development of students' competences. My objectives as a teacher in economics are: first, to teach students theoretical concepts and how to use them in order to understand real-life situations; second, to instruct students about the empirical methods used in applied economics to answer research questions. In my teaching, I accomplish these objectives both in class, by accompanying theoretical lectures with examples or discussions of real-life phenomena, and in the evaluation phase, which can include both in-class assessment (exercises and open-ended questions) or take-home assignments, depending on the level of the course.

During my PhD, I acted as a teaching assistant for an undergraduate course in '**Labor Economics**' at the School of Political Sciences of the University of Turin. One of the major challenges was to deal with the students' heterogeneous knowledge of math and the subsequent anxiety of those with a limited math background. I dealt with these problems by trying to explain 'in words' the major theories of the subject, and by using references to real facts. For instance, I used to open up discussions on how the current economic crisis has affected the decision to invest in education, patterns of individual and household migration, and labor market phenomena, such as the 'discouraged worker' effect. From that experience, and from the subsequent training in academic practice that I have had at the Max Weber Programme (MWP) at the European University Institute (EUI), I realized that students' attention, in particular at the undergraduate level and in large classes, can be easily lost if only one visual instrument, such as slides, is used. In contrast, I have found it really useful to integrate the use of slides with writing formulas and graphs on the board, so that the students can grasp more readily all the passages leading to the final result. I used this approach when I was lecturing at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Spain), in the framework of the Teaching Exchange Week required for the '**MWP Teaching Certificate**'. Noting on the blackboard the alternative models that explain the different types of unemployment, while projecting a slide showing the different trends in unemployment between European countries and the US, turned out to be very effective in maintaining students' participation, not only during class but also afterwards, when I had the chance to further discuss these topics with them. During the academic year 2013-14, I acted as a teaching assistant for a PhD level course in '**Econometrics and Causality**' at the EUI, which was a challenging but stimulating experience. Since then, I have had the occasion to mentor PhD students and to discuss with them their research projects.

*Postdoctoral Max Weber Programme, European University Institute. E-mail: ylenia.brilli@eui.eu

The same interests in applied micro-econometrics and labor economics that propel my research also inspire my teaching. When I was a teaching assistant for the undergraduate course in Labor Economics mentioned above, I taught several lectures presenting the results of my own work and that of other scholars on the effects of non-parental child care on children's subsequent development. These lectures were aimed at introducing students to the use of empirical methods to answer research questions in a policy-oriented perspective, and were accompanied by similar lectures on the effects of fertility on women's labor supply and the effects of migration on wages. These lectures allowed me to open up the discussion with the students, whose involvement seemed to be confirmed by the high number of questions and comments. In preparation for next Spring Term, I am currently designing a 10-hour lecture series on Structural Econometrics, for the EUI PhD program in economics. The course is intended to help students to gain familiarity with simulation in empirical applications and to understand the main insights of scholarly papers using structural econometrics. This course draws on my research experience in simulation-based econometric methods and structural estimation, with a focus on applications in the fields of labor economics, economics of education and family economics. In particular, in the course, I aim to provide a balance between the necessary technical tools to improve students' ability in programming simulation-based econometrics (i.e., simulated maximum likelihood and simulated method of moments), and the intuitions behind these studies presenting empirical applications. The assessment includes a take-home exam, in which the students have to implement the methods presented in class using a simulated dataset, and a referee report, in which they have to comment an unpublished paper. The use of a referee report as a part of the assessment is also helpful to initiate the students to the academic practice of the peer-review.

As shown by this teaching statement, whether at the undergraduate or graduate level, my strategies are aimed at boosting students' knowledge of theoretical concepts in economics and at increasing their awareness of the usefulness of empirical methods to answer real-life research questions.