

ROBERT PAUL HARTLEY
Teaching Statement

An industrial engineering undergraduate, economics was not my primary focus. Only later did I realize that the questions that mattered most to me—on causes and consequences of poverty—were fundamentally economic questions of human behavior and scarcity requiring a combination of mathematical modeling, historical context, and creative problem solving. Now, as a teacher of economics, my cross-disciplinary experience reminds me to frame why we care, my inequality research pushes me to be inclusive and provide scaffolding for struggling students, and my enthusiasm and content knowledge help me to motivate high-performing students to take their discovery further.

On the first day of class, I begin with stories that connect economic/statistical concepts to real-world interests, and then I transition toward my students' interests through an exercise borrowing from the psychology literature on learning inequality. Based on Geoffrey Cohen's theory on stereotype threat, I ask each student to write three personal values that shape their perspective. This exercise affirms individual self-worth and is proven to statistically diminish achievement gaps by race and gender. I also emphasize Carol Dweck's research on growth mindset and achievement, and I offer an introductory how-to-succeed study session for the course, which has led to mentoring for students who were able to improve their college trajectory.

My classroom practices are built around the principles of developing intuition and skills, and I use continuous feedback to assess these goals. For example, I encourage students to take agency in the learning process through low-stakes practice and mixed assessment methods. Most assignments are evaluated on effort, yet the point is for students to circle what they do not know and write questions in the margins. This way, I can prioritize time spent addressing specific learning needs in class. Along with this metric of student progress, I also survey students after each exam for ways to improve the class. More directly, I allow students to refocus our class discussion using an index-card system: Speaking with one student by name, I ask if they have any question or want to revisit any topic. Even when the answer is no, this approach consistently leads to unexpected insights or questions from *all* parts of the room.

In order to engage students, I regularly innovate for a more interactive environment. I have used a project-based course for statistics in which I supervise and guide groups in class, and they submit project components throughout the term following a careful rubric. Another innovation I have used is a class segment I called "Ask-an-Economist", for which the class submitted questions in advance of a call with an economist at, *e.g.*, Brookings, Census, or the State Department. These sessions allowed me to bring in expert perspectives while also showcasing researchers and policy analysts from diverse backgrounds to inspire a broader set of students. Further, I introduce different perspectives in class to promote critical thinking, for instance, contextualizing historical moments such as Rev. Dr. King's influence on the Humphrey-Hawkins Act, or emphasizing alternative approaches to open research questions. On the technological side, I have innovated by creating an **R Shiny** application with interactive, regression-based learning modules, and I regularly teach using current, publicly-available data along with references for further exploration. Moreover, I continue to adapt my methods based on current, evidence-based practices for student-centered learning.

I have taught economic statistics, macroeconomics, and guest lectured for graduate courses in labor economics and public policy as well as various undergraduate courses. My general teaching preferences are courses in public and labor economics, microeconomics, social policy, and statistics/econometrics. During my time at the University of Kentucky, I was competitively selected by the Graduate School to lead a three-day, intensive orientation on effective teaching practices for incoming teaching assistants across the university. As a postdoctoral researcher, I have continued professional development including being selected to participate in an inclusive-teaching workshop at Columbia University. Good teaching, like good research, is a relational learning process: whether motivating introductory students or exchanging ideas with colleagues, I appreciate the academic endeavor of collaboratively seeking answers and, at times, new possibilities.