Teaching Experience and Philosophy

My primary goals for student learning are three-fold: to develop student’s technical and critical thinking skills, to help students themselves be effective communicators of the concepts they learn and to create a learning environment where students can develop empathy and become globally engaged leaders. I have experience as the primary instructor for Industrial Organizations at University of San Diego and as a Teaching Assistant at UC San Diego. I also have experience as an undergraduate teaching assistant at UCSD. I would be excited to teach a wide range of courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level including Big Data & data analytics, applied econometrics/quantitative methods, forecasting, introductory & intermediate microeconomics, health economics, public economics & taxation, international economics, urban economics, industrial organization, labor economics, environmental economics, behavioral economics, experimental economics, game theory, and entrepreneurship/innovation courses. I would also feel comfortable teaching introductory and intermediate macroeconomics at the undergraduate level.

As the current instructor for Industrial Organizations at University of San Diego, I am using a multidisciplinary approach by incorporating classical theory with up-to-date real world applications from fields traditionally outside of industrial organization field. By integrating concepts from the field of data analytics into the course material students can see not only how theories apply to the real world, but also be informed of current topics they’ll face in the job market. I strive to broaden students’ viewpoints by incorporating a global perspective. For example, when discussing how firms price products my students looked up pharmaceutical prices from around the world and compared those to domestic prices. In discussing possible causes of the price discrepancies students posited a number of hypotheses as to how the U.S. might differ from other countries. Training students to look approach problems from multiple viewpoints, whether from the viewpoint of multiple disciplines or different countries and cultures, not only expands their critical thinking skills, but also serves to promote empathy.

To promote active learning, I employ a variety of methods. Course lectures and readings provide a foundation of knowledge for students to build on. Reinforcing this knowledge with class projects, in-class presentations and team exercises helps my students connect what they learn in the classroom to the real world. I often encourage my students to work together so that they can learn from one another in addition to learning from my instruction. Peer-to-peer instruction has proven to be valuable for many of my students because, as many will tell you, you do not fully understand a concept until you can teach it to others. Peer instruction also facilitates communication skills and often fosters in-class participation. Many students who engaged in peer instruction outside of the classroom subsequently increased their in-class participation.

Finding ways to engage students in the required material is key to helping them learn and retain core concepts. Guest speakers are one way to bring the course material alive. Guest speakers add new perspective for students, as they are able to connect theory to practice and share their own personal experiences. While teaching Industrial Organization, I invited a guest speaker to speak to my students about what economics skills were necessary for success in one’s career. Many of my students were pleasantly surprised that concepts such as elasticity of demand and STATA skills are
transferable to real life! Both in my experience as an instructor and as a teaching assistant, I have seen how guest speakers can inspire students to become actively involved both in- and outside of class.

In the tight job market many undergraduates are now facing, I believe that it is important to provide students with the skills employers seek, rather than merely providing students with theoretical knowledge. For example, many students will ace a course in probability and statistics, but are unable to fully understand how to gather data from sources, work with the data, run regressions, create effective visual aids, interpret results, troubleshoot programming errors, etc. Providing students with opportunities to “get their hands dirty” with class projects helps students practice and apply the knowledge they have learned in class, but also provides students with something to add to their resumes as actual experience. Further, I believe that working through team projects provides students a chance to learn how to overcome unexpected problems and builds their communication skills.

I also believe it is important to nurture any entrepreneurial aspirations students might have. I have encountered so many students with entrepreneurial spirit who have ideas they would like to bring to fruition, but have received no guidance on how to do so. I hope to encourage these aspirations by providing mentorship and guidance. Since I have personally designed Prometheus, which is the first App of its kind for mobile devices, I am comfortable guiding both undergraduate and graduate students in the process of creating and designing a mobile app. As an interdisciplinary researcher who has collaborated with the Jacobs School of Engineering - Bioengineering Department, I hope to inspire my students to learn from disciplines outside of their chosen field as well. The interdisciplinary approach has allowed me to learn from many different fields of study, from economics to business, math, engineering, psychology and neuroscience. Therefore, when teaching I hope to incorporate the perspectives from multiple disciplines in order to supply students with a full picture of a particular concept.

**Commitment to Diversity**

As a woman of Hispanic descent I know first-hand what it means to be “underrepresented” in the collegiate environment. As both a lecturer and teaching assistant I have had the pleasure of interacting with students from different socio-economic backgrounds, underrepresented groups, and also students with different learning abilities. I found that in addition to teaching the course material, I was also helping students with their career choices and providing counsel on how to deal with situations where they were the only member of their group represented in class, at work, etc. As a graduate student I have also participated in the Women in Economics discussion group. The group’s purpose is the retention of female graduate students and faculty. This group connects junior-level graduate students with senior-level graduate students who are further along in their career. Several women have reached out to me through this program and I was able to provide them assistance and counsel.

I remain committed to issues of diversity, equity and inclusive excellence. If hired, I hope to maintain this commitment with community outreach and by participating in diversity efforts on campus through the Center for Inclusion and Diversity.
Summary of Student and Instructor Evaluations
Summary of teaching evaluations from 2012 to Spring 2015. Originals available upon request.

A selection of Instructor comments about me:
• “...She can take much of the credit for the declining rate of withdrawals and the systemic increase in individual grades. But overall course morale is the most important contribution. Students trust her and this reduces stress and boosts learning.”

• “Alison is a superb TA. She anticipates potential problems, deficiencies in student progress, and proposes remedial measures. She sets a leadership example for the Tutors and her presence is a boost to overall classroom morale.”

• “Adept and thoughtful supervisor (of the undergraduate Tutors). Well organized and communicative. A boost to morale for the class.”

A selection of Student comments about me:
• “Your lecturing was pretty good!”

• “Alison helped me a lot in understanding the material. I made an appointment with her to gain further understanding of the course and as a student with ADHD, she went through everything very slowly and clearly. One of the best TAs I've had and put time into helping me.”

• “Out of all the Teaching Assistants in this course, she was the most helpful of all that provided constructive criticism and demonstrated different approaches that could be used for certain problems.”

• “Allison was terrific! This material is not easy for everyone and people all get confused in different areas but she helped us all through it. Very step by step and confident because the professor confused the hell out of everyone a lot of times which is understandable but she would essentially translate the material to us, thus giving all of us a better chance for success in class. Great job Allison!”

• “Awesome TA, very good at explaining concepts and going over examples”

• “Very approachable and friendly :)”

• “Very sweet. She knows her material and will help you understand when you need help in. Explains material very well.”

• “I would have bombed this class without her! She’s absolutely amazing!!!!”
I would recommend this Teaching Assistant to other students.

- 65 (80%): Agree
- 15 (18%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 2 (2%): Disagree

The Teaching Assistant was approachable, courteous, and showed concern for students’ learning and understanding.

- 62 (82%): Agree
- 11 (14%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 3 (4%): Disagree

The Teaching Assistant presented course material clearly and answered questions during office hours.

- 47 (72%): Agree
- 16 (25%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 2 (3%): Disagree

The Teaching Assistant presented course material clearly and answered questions during discussion sections.

- 35 (80%): Agree
- 9 (20%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 0 (0%): Disagree

The Teaching Assistant presented course material clearly and answered questions during exam reviews.

- 35 (76%): Agree
- 10 (22%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 1 (2%): Disagree

The Teaching Assistant came prepared and well-organized to discussion sections and exam reviews.

- 65 (78%): Agree
- 16 (20%): Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- 2 (2%): Disagree