

I teach because I believe that the challenges facing my students and society require individuals who think critically and communicate effectively. In my classes, students learn to engage with new ideas and express their own by developing analytical, critical thinking, and communication skills. I believe that economics offers a valuable set of tools for understanding a complex and increasingly data-driven world. I teach to equip my students with those tools.

My approach to teaching has been influenced by my experiences working in college classrooms and Nicaraguan high schools, conducting technical training in Mozambique, and growing up with elementary and special education teachers for parents. As a result, I am committed to engaging students in an interactive learning process in which they develop the confidence to express and defend unique ideas. As a TA for undergraduate courses in Global Poverty and Development Economics, I compiled readings and videos on real-world events to pose questions about challenging issues: from social justice to food policy. I also facilitated lab activities in which students experimented with solar lighting and charcoal production to consider the challenges of relying on these technologies.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in rural Nicaragua, I had the opportunity to see the fruits of promoting student empowerment through interactive learning first hand. For two years, I co-taught a high school entrepreneurship class and mentored teams of students—many of whom had never left their municipality—through a series of national business plan competitions. In addition to their exposure to new places and ideas, both teachers and students developed confidence in their own abilities and the creative potential of their rural communities.

I also believe that effective teaching is about capacity building. I help students develop the ability to understand concepts and learn skills that can be applied to many problems. As one student from my intermediate microeconomics discussion section wrote, “[Jonathan] explained concepts simply and slowly and made sure we understood intuitive approaches. . . rather than just how to do specific problems.” Or, as another student put it, “[He] made sure we understood the concepts of the mechanics instead of just memorizing formulas.” To further develop my teaching, I recently completed a six-week *Foundations in Teaching* workshop through the UC Davis Center for Educational Effectiveness.

In addition to four quarters as a teaching assistant, I have also trained enumerator teams, designed educational sessions on agricultural practices and insurance in rural Mozambique, and presented technical details to non-academic research partners. In each case, my approach was tailored to the audience. This was particularly challenging in rural Mozambique where literacy levels were low and sessions took place far from a conventional classroom.

In summary, my diverse teaching experience has given me an appreciation for the need to approach each learning scenario and group of students differently. In doing so, I create an interactive learning environment that pushes my students to become confident, independent thinkers. My classes challenge students to engage with real world problems, offering them the opportunity to apply the analytical skills they are learning in a meaningful way.