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## TEACHING STATEMENT

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## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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A useful metaphor for describing my philosophy of teaching is a network, one in which students are nodes connected to other students, to teachers, and to academic content. A structure such as this is an effective environment to facilitate student learning, maturation and realization of future goals. When I say that students are nodes, what I mean is that the academic learning space consists of three inter-related relationships in which students are centrally located. First, students benefit from strong peer networks. In these networks, students obtain experiential knowledge about different perspectives from the diverse backgrounds and intellectual frameworks of their peers. Moreover, because students have specializations in different content areas, a rich peer network allows students to both contribute and benefit from diverse expertise. Second, students benefit when teachers are actively invested in their learning, maturation and ambitions. Teachers introduce students to intellectual content in large group settings and ultimately, with time, develop more contextualized mentorship roles in more localized settings. In these different contexts, teachers both contribute to student learning, but also help the students define and realize their short- and long-term goals. Third, the becoming of a student occurs when individuals are actively pursuing intellectual growth through the structured consumption of scholarly content. Fundamentally, exposure to and consumption of academic content is what defines the “being” of a student, and the classroom setting is the environment in which this transformation takes place.

The responsibility of the teacher is therefore to provide structural support to ensure the survival and vitality of this networked learning environment. To forge strong peer networks, teachers first establish classroom norms so that students feel safe and comfortable articulating their points of view. Then, teachers incorporate modular learning environments in their classrooms, giving students opportunities to work with different groups of peers. Teacher-student relationships originate in the classroom setting, as teachers first learn their students’ names and identities. From there, teachers act as mentors and provide more specific support to students, as they come to office hours and communicate individually with professors through email and other channels. Finally, teachers introduce students to new and challenging material and guide their learning. To be successful, teachers must be mindful of both their practice and course content. In the area of practice, teachers can incorporate multiple instructional strategies, gather feedback from students and adapt instructional techniques based on that infor-

mation, and use external pedagogical expertise to continuously revise and improve instructional practice. In the area of course content, teachers should ensure that students are presented with foundational and current research, are presented with diverse and compelling points of view, and are shown how intellectual content is produced—either through consumption of scholarly material or by generating novel research ideas and conducting data analysis. In sum, I view the teacher as the builder and maintainer of student-to-student, student-to-teacher and student-to-knowledge relations, all of which are constitutive of networked learning environments.

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#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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Here, I describe my teaching experience, and draw connections to my philosophy of teaching described above. At the graduate level, I have had many experiences designing and teaching academic courses. At the University of Pennsylvania, in the Graduate School of Education, I have designed and currently teach a course called Inequality and Education that encapsulates my interests and approach to teaching in many ways. Students from the education policy masters program, doctoral students from the Graduate School of Education, and undergraduate students from the Wharton School of Business have all participated in the class. The course and my instruction have received excellent reviews from students, as the overall course rating is 3.15 out of 4 (relative to a 3.04 departmental average), and my overall instructor rating is 3.6 out of 4 (relative to a 3.31 departmental average). Students' comments were equally favorable. For example, one student wrote, “[p]rofessor Shores expressed genuine interest in students' learning and was eager to help them grasp course content. I really appreciated his lecture slides and explanations of some of the more difficult concepts from the reading. Professor Shores exhibited a great deal of expertise in the subject matter and was able to provide insights beyond those to be gleaned from course material. Professor Shores made himself available to students and was good at motivating students to take advantage of his office hours to discuss their final projects.”

The course explores both the theoretical and quantitative components of educational inequality. Theoretical content is drawn from the area of political philosophy, and addresses questions of *why* inequality is relevant. Quantitative content is drawn from the areas of statistics, economics and sociology, and addresses *how* inequality is to be measured. Ultimately, the course asks students to determine whether statistical measurement appropriately tracks normative goals. Salient topics covered in the course include income inequality, social mobility, segregation, poverty, and achievement gaps.

I begin the course by introducing students to a custom in political philosophy, which is, whenever possible, to provide the most generous interpretation of an opponent's argument before criticizing. This norm is useful because it encourages both intellectual rigor and collegiality. As the semester unfolds, course content is learned from a combination of lecture, student-led presentations, and small-group discussions. Membership in student groups rotates throughout the semester, so that students are exposed to novel points of view. In the middle of the semester, I administer a brief anonymous survey to assess how students are doing in the class. Finally, I have regular office hours, and I actively encourage students to attend these.

For their final projects, students conduct a quantitative analysis using publicly available data. For many of these students, this is their first experience applying quantitative methods to real data, and I help guide them through the project design cycle. After four weeks, students submit research proposals with the objective of providing clearly articulated conceptual frameworks, research questions, and analysis plans. I provide detailed feedback on these proposals and schedule semi-weekly meetings with students to ensure steady progress. These projects allow me to provide students with adaptive one-on-one support that is invaluable for their growth.

As a graduate student at Stanford University, I co-developed and co-taught a course with Sean Reardon called Inequality, Society and Education. In this course, I helped develop lecture slides, gave lectures, and taught a weekly seminar that developed and extended concepts from the week's material. I was also a teaching assistant for a workshop (with Sean Reardon and Prudence Carter) called Poverty, Inequality and Education, in which I coordinated weekly seminars for invited speakers. Finally, I was a graduate student coordinator for the Humanities Center Lecture Series. In this role, my responsibilities included selecting and inviting guest speakers, and other administrative duties.

Prior to attending graduate school, I taught elementary and middle school for seven years. For five of those years, I was a middle school English and math teacher at a Bureau of Indian Education school located in northwest New Mexico (which is, in turn, located on the eastern "checkerboard" side of the Navajo Nation Reservation). It was in this role that I learned the importance of teacher humility, which is necessary to understand the diversity of student approaches to learning. I developed many skills throughout my first years of teaching, including diversifying one's teaching practice, taking advantage of colleague expertise and professional development opportunities, and listening to one's students. Each of these skills are essential to ensure that students from such different backgrounds can master course content.

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#### PROSPECTIVE COURSES

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Given the opportunity to develop courses of my choosing, I would be interested in a course on educational decision-making that would combine concepts from economics and normative theory to help future leaders articulate competing goals and develop strategies for realizing those goals given scarce resources. I would also like to teach courses in K-12 education finance and education policy. Education finance—both policy and research—has undergone dramatic changes recently, and any future education leader should have deep knowledge of the policy and research on this topic.

I would also be interested in teaching a course that provides an overall description of the distribution of educational inputs (for example, school finance and teacher quality) and a survey of educational policies, emphasizing the expected causal effects and costs. Such a course would give future leaders an expansive overview of the kinds of educational levers that are available, and, given a set of objectives and budget constraints, improve decision making.

I would also be interested in teaching a course that addresses the question “does public education make inequality better or worse?” The course would cover historical and contemporary theoretical and empirical literature on the subject, as well as give students an opportunity to use data to answer the question. I would also enjoy teaching a class that combines classical political philosophy and sociological theory on the topics of distributive justice and stratification. Although these two disciplines have considerable topical overlap, they are rarely brought together, to the detriment of both.

Finally, I would teach introductory and advanced courses in data analysis and quantitative methods, including topics such as: (i) multivariate regression; (ii) using large databases in education; (iii) causal inference: statistical methods for program evaluation and policy research; and (iv) experimental and quasi-experimental design and analysis.

Finally, it is critical to note that I actively strive to improve my pedagogical practice. I take advantage of social media tools, where academic professionals in related fields widely discuss course materials (textbooks, datasets and best practices) and exciting new research. I also incorporate self-evaluations (through student surveys and invited external review) to ensure that students are well served by my classes.