

## Teaching statement Florian Kuhn

I have prepared and taught 4 different courses at Binghamton University: the intermediate undergraduate course ECON 362 “Macroeconomic Theory”, the advanced undergraduate course ECON 485F “Economic Growth and Structural Transformation”, the core PhD course ECON 613 “Macroeconomics I” as well as the PhD field course ECON 696G “Dynamic Macroeconomics”.

In my teaching the goal is to provide to the students the largest possible amount of conceptual insight and make accessible and understandable the greatest possible amount of knowledge. Since the courses taught take place in very different settings, and serve very different purposes I adopt a variety of teaching styles and methods to deliver the best possible learning outcomes for students in each situation. There are, however, some general principles which I adhere to in designing courses on any level: Abstractability, Recursion and Feedback, which interact with one another.

Abstractability refers to the overall structure of the course, which should evolve in a way that at any point in the course it is clear a) which conceptual building blocks the current topic entails and b) where this building block fits into the big picture of the course. For example, I state clearly what is theory and application, am very careful to use clean examples that actually illustrate the underlying concept well, and at the beginning or end of every class summarize the connection of the current topic to the overall course.

Related is the principle of recursion. Because of the modularity in the course contents that following an abstractable course structure provides, it is possible to start with the very basic teaching units and concepts in order to combine them as the course progresses and advance to more complex topics. The recursion principle goes beyond “from the easy to the hard” because it requires to arrive at the more complex contents of the course in a way that revisits, builds on and expands already familiar concepts. For the student, this facilitates the ascent to the new material and allows for the student to review and check their knowledge about previously seen material.

The principle of feedback in turn interacts with both previous principles. I implement frequent assessments of students’ knowledge to which they receive quick feedback – either instantly as in the case of in-class questions/discussions, or in written form, as in the case of homeworks and tests. The goal is to highlight which of the conceptual building blocks needs review, and to make sure the connection of new class material to the previous is established well.

As mentioned above, my teaching goal is providing the largest possible amount of conceptual insight and making accessible and understandable the greatest possible amount of knowledge to students. Extensive literature in education shows that student evaluations are inappropriate measures of these goals. When creating a course, I therefore do not take into account possible effects of course design on student evaluations. I will now turn to describing the teaching methods employed in each course individually.

### ECON 362 “Macroeconomic Theory”

In these large courses, I rely heavily on the excellent teaching materials around the textbook “Macroeconomics” by Abel, Bernanke and Croushore which goes a long way in terms of providing a modular and recursive course structure. The provision of feedback to students is implemented through the frequent use of in-class clicker questions preceded by discussion among the students, weekly online

homework, and two midterm exams. A challenge with large class sizes with a diverse set of student backgrounds is to make the material accessible and engaging for all students. The approach here is to gear the small-group discussion sections held by TAs towards the review of more basic concepts to particularly support the lower-scoring students, and to have daily office hours by myself or the TAs.

#### ECON 485F “Economic Growth and Structural Transformation”

This advanced undergraduate class discusses the theory, history, and empirical regularities of economic growth in both national and global contexts, and the structural transformation economies undergo in their growth process. Building on the book by “Economic Growth” I design most of the teaching materials myself, and expanding them by incorporating media elements like videos or interactive data repositories. The teaching style is a mixture of lectures with following class discussion. Consistent with the multi-faceted nature of economic growth and development students are challenged to approach the subject in a variety of ways: learning assessments take the form of homeworks, data exercises, a midterm, a term paper and a final exam.

#### ECON 613 “Macroeconomics I”

Because of the small class size, the varying levels of prior student knowledge the course contents are highly customized to the specific class and its students. For the core sequence “Macroeconomics I” I use a lecture format building on my own notes. These in turn follow the canon standard across many graduate schools for first-semester PhD macroeconomics slightly adapted in terms of scope. In a small classroom setting even the lecture format allows for ample room for me to ask questions to the students and vice versa. Further feedback occurs via weekly homeworks, a TA discussion section and a midterm exam.

#### ECON 696G “Dynamic Macroeconomics”

This elective course in the Macroeconomics field for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>-year PhD students focuses on numerical tools and computational techniques to solve macroeconomic models and compare them to the data. . In this small class setting I mix lectures with hands-on practice sessions. During lectures I develop the theoretical underpinnings by discussing with students potential approaches to a problem and guiding them towards the solutions to ensure they think about the “why” as much as about the “what”. In the practice sessions, students suggest, develop and discuss the practical application of the solution methods which often consists in writing computer code to solve a given problem. Here I make sure to link the implemented solution and the specifics of the problem back to the theoretical concepts students have learned.

#### Student advising

I have also advised students on various issues outside the classroom and course system. I discuss student advising more in my service statement.