

W. Jason Beasley

Department of Applied Economics, Oregon State University
319A Ballard Extension Hall
2591 SW Campus Way, Corvallis, OR 97331
beasleyw@oregonstate.edu

TEACHING STATEMENT

My teaching interests align with research concentrations in the fields of environmental economics, health economics and applied econometrics. I am interested in teaching both graduate and undergraduate courses in these areas, core microeconomics, and developing new courses to fit the needs of my department. In addition to teaching, I look forward to opportunities in mentoring undergraduate and graduate students and facilitating interdisciplinary working group seminars among complementary departments (i.e., biology, ecology, geoinformatics, etc.).

Teaching Experience & Personal Development

I taught “Introduction to Environmental Economics & Policy (AEC 250)” in the Summer of 2017. The purpose of AEC 250 is to introduce core economic principles while framing the application of concepts within an environmental setting. This class is taken by economics majors, ag-business majors and a variety of engineering majors. By nearly all metrics, my instruction outperforms the department and university as a whole (see Figure 1). I am particularly proud of the student response with respect to the use of various learning techniques and the ability to foster a welcoming environment. My instruction style incorporates standard presentations, in-class games to demonstrate key concepts (e.g., equilibrium and the prisoners dilemma), open-forum student discussion and group problem solving. My students responded well to deviations from standard presentations. Student led discussions and group problem solving were specifically singled out as activities that were engaging, fun and helpful. I look forward to implementing additional games and activities into my courses. I also believe it is important for every student to have a voice and be heard. As an instructor, I set the tone for listening to students’ thoughts and responding in a cordial manner. Empowering students from diverse backgrounds to share their thoughts provided new insights and thoughts for the class to digest. For example, my course had students from farming backgrounds, large city backgrounds and a retiree pursuing a degree. Each group had opinions shaped by their experiences that they were able to share with the class. Environmental policy discussions were lively and interesting, while full of diverse beliefs that contributed a richness to the conversation. A PDF of evaluation forms, including optional student comments, is available upon request.

I have also served as a “fill-in” instructor for a dynamic problem solving course at the graduate level. This course was slated to be the first exposure to fisheries and dynamic solution concepts. To prepare for the graduate level class, I first consulted my own course notes and briefly reviewed the book. I then met with the instructor to gather additional notes and understand the learning expectations for the class. This lecture, while somewhat heavy on mathematical computation, is very conducive to graphical illustration. I explained each component of the problem (i.e. growth functions, yield-effort functions, etc.) and used graphs to visually illustrate the problem. Finally, we turned to simple solutions in Excel (based on

Conrad problems) and altered problem inputs to gain further intuition. For example, we discussed the discount rate and the intuition on how changing discount rates should alter harvest and stock levels. We then changed the discount rate in the simple solution, re-solved the problem and discussed the results as a group.

To further advance my teaching skillset, I have completed the Applied Economics Pedagogy Brownbag Workshop . This monthly series is led by rotating instructors who guide discussion on pedagogical topics, including classroom games for economics, hybrid course instruction and design and development of an active learning environment. There were several key takeaways that immediately impacted my instruction. The workshop on syllabus creation included a lengthy discussion on linking learning objectives to course assignments. While this may sound obvious, as a new instructor it reminded me to think of about the purpose of every lecture, and its role as a building block towards high level course objectives. I also used the opportunity to develop a short “pitch” to explain to my students how each assignment fits into a broader objective. The workshop also included a seminar on using classroom games, which immediately led me to implement a basic game demonstrating the prisoner’s dilemma. I look forward to the opportunity to develop hybrid material and further utilize games and other in-class activities to generate engagement and thoughtful discussions from my students.

Lastly, I have served as a TA for AEC250 at Oregon State University. My duties as a TA included holding office hours, moderating the online Canvas discussion board and assisting distance-learning students with assignments and questions surrounding prior lessons. TAs are not graded by students during end of term evaluations.

Teaching Philosophy

My philosophy in teaching has evolved through pedagogical workshops and my experience as both a graduate student and instructor. I approach the role of instructor with a variety of objectives in mind. My first responsibility is to align course content and student outcomes to standards of quality and knowledge. Secondly, I strive to develop students' "soft" skills, including critical thinking, technical writing, communication and collaboration. Thirdly, I actively make myself available to students for mentoring or conversations that extend beyond coursework. I feel the challenge of being a successful instructor lies in balancing all of these tasks in a rigorous, yet welcoming environment that appropriately prepares students.

I deliver course content via standard instruction, open-forum discussion and in-class group problem solving. I use a combination of prepared notes, lecture slides and real-time examples completed in class amongst groups. I purposefully structure note and slide packages for distribution to students with ample white space to be populated by the student. This technique is utilized to encourage active note-taking that complements slide material and supplementary content. I encourage open discussion as a means of facilitating learning around core concepts and their application. I use a variety of techniques to start, probe and moderate discussion with the hope that students select topics of intrigue without my intervention. I strongly believe this flexibility in topic selection is a trait that lends itself to capturing the attention of a class that may otherwise wane. After lecturing on key topics, I divide the class into subgroups and provide them with sample problems and applications. I then roam amongst the groups, ensuring students are working together towards completion of their problem packets.

For many students, economics courses may be their first exposure to being asked to apply critical thinking skills to solve problems. Instead of rote memorization and routine problem solving, I challenge my students to think critically. Economics is ideal for this evolution in thinking because economics problems can often be answered visually with graphs, mathematically through equations, and verbally with clear and succinct descriptive responses. Allowing students multiple channels to develop answers enables me to challenge students with skills beyond textbook knowledge. Succinctly responding with oral answers in a debate, writing clear and concise answers to open-ended questions and learning to work successfully within a group are all key skills that may be reinforced in most economic theory courses.

Some students require the ability to link tasks, concepts and learning outcomes to understand the value of what they are learning in non-academic settings. This is an area that I can distinguish myself from my peers. With over ten years of professional experience in a variety of industries and countries, I am capable of providing the links from economics education to real world situations. I am always open to sharing my experiences, particularly with students who are interested in non-academic work after graduation. This attitude is why I consider mentoring, or fostering relationships that extend beyond the course lecture, a vital component for an instructor at the university level.

INTRO ENVIRON ECON & POLICY (Summer 2017 (201800))

Instructor: **Beasley, William**
 Subject: **AEC**
 Catalog & Section: **250 001**
 Course ID: **73552**
 Objectives:

Enrollment: **12**
 Responses Incl Declines: **10**
 Declines: **0**

Course and Instructor								
Question	Number of Responses	Response Rate	Course Mean	Dept. Mean	Univ. Mean	Course Median	Dept. Median	Univ. Median
The course as a whole was	10	83%	4.8	4.7	5.0	5.0	4.8	5.3
The instructor's contribution to the course was	10	83%	5.3	4.8	5.1	5.7	5.3	5.5
Clarity of course objectives or outcomes was	10	83%	4.9	4.9	5.0	4.5	4.9	5.4
Clarity of student responsibilities and requirements was	10	83%	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.5	5.5	5.4
Course organization was	10	83%	5.2	4.9	5.0	5.5	5.2	5.4
Availability of extra help when needed was	10	83%	5.7	5.1	5.1	5.9	5.6	5.5
Instructor's use of various instructional techniques to accommodate differences in learning styles among students was	10	83%	5.0	4.5	4.9	5.5	4.9	5.3
Instructor's interest in my learning was	10	83%	5.2	4.8	5.1	5.7	5.2	5.5
Instructor's ability to stimulate my thinking more deeply about the subject was	10	83%	5.1	4.7	5.0	5.5	5.0	5.4
Instructor's timely feedback to tests and other work was	10	83%	5.2	4.8	5.0	5.5	5.3	5.5
Instructor's ability to develop a welcoming classroom environment for all participants was	10	83%	5.5	5.2	5.2	5.8	5.6	5.6
Instructor's evaluation of student performance in accordance with course objectives was	10	83%	5.3	5.1	5.1	5.5	5.3	5.5
Note: 1:Very Poor; 2:Poor; 3:Fair; 4:Good; 5:Very Good; 6:Excellent; -1:Unable To Rate;								

Figure 1: Course Evaluation Comparative Measures