

# Teaching Dossier

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# **I Biographical Information**

## **Contact Information**

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I am a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Economics at Memorial University. I plan to defend my thesis from McMaster University in December of 2016. My research areas include nonparametric econometrics, survey statistics, barriers to health care, determinants of health, and public policy. At Memorial University, I teach one undergraduate course per semester in introductory macroeconomic theory, where I spend 78 hours interacting with students per term through lectures and office hours and 78 hours preparing lectures, assessments, and practice materials. I have experience as a TA for both undergraduate and graduate courses, including graduate econometrics and graduate microeconomics for Public Policy. My work as an instructor and as a TA has given me experience teaching economic theory, promoting discussions, invigilating, grading, working closely with students, and providing feedback to students. As an English teacher in France, I gained experience in classroom management, collaborating with other faculty, and inclusionary teaching methods. My teaching experiences continue to grow and bring reward. It is because of the experiences I have had that I look forward to continue teaching in an academic environment.

## II Teaching Philosophy

I have been fortunate in my life to have studied under great professors who conveyed both simple and complex materials in a lucid and compelling manner. I base my own approach to teaching on a mixture of my most favoured pedagogical characteristics from past instructors. While these instructors differed in many ways, they all demonstrated a high level of preparation, which I believe to be a key to their success as effective educators. When it comes to teaching, being prepared not only translates to a full understanding of the material but also how best to teach the material in a logical order and the correct medium for presenting the material (e.g. seminar, lecture, powerpoint, blackboard, video, and/or discussion). Economics encompasses a myriad of topics, which may require different approaches to effectively deliver the appropriate message to students. Being prepared promotes an open learning environment as it allows students to ask a broad range of questions, leading to engaging discussions. Questioning the material provides feedback and a method for auditing one's understanding. A prepared teacher is more flexible and presents topics in ways that facilitate student engagement.

Other aspects of teaching I incorporate are student engagement, assessments that stimulate independent thinking, and review of pre-requisite concepts. Teaching also provides external benefits for understanding economics, which can be translated to students through collaboration.

### **Student Engagement**

Student engagement cultivates learning as the students' attention will be focused on the coursework and, by increasing interest in a topic, will encourage independent study. Engagement is nurtured by forming a connection between economic theory and the student. By incorporating real-world examples into lesson plans, students can relate to economic theory and develop an intuitive understanding of the principal ideas. Also, by connecting students with practitioners in the community, from government officials to business leaders to civil society leaders, students get a better sense of the applications of economic concepts in the real-world. This is easier to achieve in small classes as the types of assignments and discussions can better accommodate student participation and examples can be tailored to that particular audience. As a TA for *Introductory Macroeconomics* for six semesters, a course with an annual enrolment of over 2,400 students, I observed several methods for encouraging student engagement for large classes. The professors for this course regularly introduced innovative assessment methods that encourage student participation and interest in economic theory.

### **Assessments for Independent Thinking**

Carefully designed assessments encourage independent thinking and provide experience for the real-world. As educators, we wish not to develop economists who can simply restate theory but can apply these concepts to research that benefits all of society. I like assessments that are organized such that students show (1) they understand the basics; (2) they understand more complex material; and (3) they can apply what they have learned to a new problem. Challenging students to synthesize the concepts they have learned in order to solve a problem fosters creativity and resourcefulness. Furthermore, assessments that mirror real-world assignments help prepare students for employment in all areas, including government, private sector, and academia.

### **Review of Pre-requisite Concepts**

My approach to learning is sometimes similar to my search for a lost item: I start with the last place I had it. 'It' in this case is an understanding; I go to where I last had a solid understanding of the material and work my way forward. Many students who visit the economics help centre at McMaster University lack an understanding of the underlying mathematical methods or do not possess the foundational concepts in

economics to properly solve problems. I find reviewing the supporting material provides these students with the ability to better solve problems in a variety of cases. It helps to clarify the logical connection between the theoretical concepts in economics and the quantitative tools used to support them. Some students who have strong quantitative skills have trouble grasping normative concepts, while other students may possess economic intuition but struggle with mathematics. In a classroom setting, reviewing the pre-requisite concepts allows students to start with a more equal distribution of knowledge.

### **External Benefits from Teaching**

I truly enjoy teaching. I derive a great deal of fulfillment from helping others gain new knowledge and providing them with the tools to solve future problems. Teaching often results in a positive externality as helping others navigate through material has the added benefit of giving the instructor a better understanding of economic theory. Many revelations I have had in my own studies came from tutoring other students. For example, by drawing on lessons of different concepts to help others understand a particular problem, as the teacher, you begin to form connections between topics and develop a greater understanding of economic theory. These connections are then passed on to others through teaching. By grouping students with varying levels of economic knowledge, students can help fill the gaps in each others' understandings, offer new insights, and identify underlying connections between economic concepts.

### III Teaching Activities

#### 1 Course(s) Taught

*Economics 2020: Introductory Macroeconomics*

**Description:**

This course covers introductory economic theory and how it applies to the aggregate economy.

**Duties:**

My duties as instructor include preparing lectures, preparing and assigning assessments, grading, and holding office hours.

#### 2 Teaching Assistant Positions

##### Graduate Courses

*Economics 761: Graduate Econometrics I*

**Professor:** Mike Veall

**Description:**

Graduate Econometrics I covers ordinary least squares regression, generalized least squares regression, methods for panel-data analysis, and difference-in-difference analysis. It is for students enrolled in the Master's of Economic Policy, Master's of Economics, and PhD Economics programs.

**Duties:**

Student assignments are completed using STATA. My main role as a TA was to conduct STATA review classes that were meant to introduce STATA to new users and prepare students for their assignments. I showed students the theory behind each STATA command and what the program was calculating. I made myself open to students via email and scheduled appointments for additional help on assignments or questions about the material. Other duties included invigilating exams and marking assignments.

*Economics 727: Graduate Microeconomic Theory for Public Policy*

**Professor:** Mike Veall

**Description:**

This course covers graduate-level microeconomic theory, but with an emphasis on how the tools of microeconomics can be used to inform public policy. Topics include theory of the household and the firm, decisions under uncertainty and over time, and an introduction to welfare economics.

**Duties:**

My main duty was grading assignments. The questions were highly involved and I had to develop an appropriate rubric for consistent grading. While not a required responsibility, I made myself accessible to students to help them with question about the material.

##### Undergraduate Courses

*Economics 1BB3: Introductory Macroeconomics*

**Professor:** Bridget O'Shaughnessy

**Supervisor:** Aleksandra Gajic

**Description:**

This course offers an introduction to the methods and theory of macroeconomics and their application to the analysis of contemporary economic problems.

**Duties:**

I have worked as a teaching assistant for this course for six semesters from Winter 2013 to Fall 2015. My duties for this course consist of leading tutorials, grading quizzes, and invigilating exams. Between 2013 and 2015, the structure of the tutorials evolved to enhance student engagement. In my first semester as a TA for this course, tutorials were organized so that students formed groups and worked on an activity that presented students with real-world issues and asked them to explain the scenario using economic concepts. My role was to supervise students and review the activity. Grading was based on attendance. For the 2013 to 2014 school year, the activities were replaced by thirty minute lectures where I covered material that students often had the most difficulty with. This ensured that the students were exposed to the material twice (in-class and tutorials) and given multiple chances for questions and feedback. The students then formed groups and were quizzed on the covered material. Grades were based on quiz performance.

More recently, half of tutorials are performed in-class and half online. In-class tutorials are review classes for upcoming exams, where I cover the fifteen most difficult questions from previous tests. The online tutorials involve interactive experiments through aplia where students are assigned roles as either a demander or supplier in a market and the students must bid and make transactions. For example, in one experiment, students are given roles as either labourers (suppliers) or employers (demanders). Labourers are given entry wages and employers are given costs. There are three scenarios for which they make bids: no employment insurance, employment insurance, and more generous employment insurance. Students then see the effect of employment insurance on the market equilibrium. These experiments engage students and provide them a view of how markets work in the real-world while teaching them important economic analysis tools, including comparative statics.

*Economics 2X03/2G03: Intermediate Microeconomics*

**Professor:** Hannah Holmes

**Description:**

This course examines production decisions by firms in different market structures. It explores more deeply the behaviour of firms studied in introductory microeconomics.

**Duties:**

Duties include invigilating exams and leading weekly review sessions for approximately 120 students.

*Economics 2P03: Economics of Professional Sports*

**Professor:** Hannah Holmes

**Description:**

This course applies economic theory to the study of professional sports and focusses on North American professional sports leagues.

**Duties:**

Duties include invigilating exams and leading exam review sessions for approximately 180 students.

*Economics 3C03: Public Sector Economics - Taxation*

**Professor:** Zhen He

**Description:**

The purpose of this course is to analyze the structure of the Canadian tax system. Topics include tax system design, tax incidence and its economic effects, and alternative taxes and their relative merits.

**Duties:**

Duties include holding office hours, invigilating exams, and managing group projects. Students are asked to make group presentations. It was my role to assign groups and manage topics for each presentation.

*Economics 3M03: Introduction to Game Theory*

**Professor:** James Bruce

**Description:**

An introduction to the theory of games, including strategic, extensive and coalition games. Applications in economics, political science and evolutionary biology are discussed.

**Duties:**

My duties for this course included grading assignments, holding office hours, and invigilating the final exam.

*Economics 3H03: International Monetary Economics*

**Professor:** César Sosa-Padilla

**Description:**

Macroeconomic problems of an open economy with special reference to Canada; the international financial system and proposals for its reform.

**Duties:**

As a TA for this course, I was responsible for leading review sessions of over 120 students, grading assignments, invigilating exams, and holding office hours.

### **3 Economics Clinic Facilitator**

The Economics Clinic is a help centre for introductory and intermediate economic theory. As a facilitator, my duties were to guide students through material and provide direction, not answers, for practice questions. For three semesters, I took on an additional role to organize the schedule for other facilitators. The majority of students came from intermediate microeconomics; to deal with the high demand from students, I grouped them by help topic and delegated facilitators to assist each group. Much of the help I provided was to review pre-requisite concepts and differential calculus. I made recommendations to course instructors to add a review of these topics to their coursework.

### **4 Non-academic Teaching Experience**

*English Teacher*

**Institution:** Lycée Gambetta

**Location:** Tourcoing, France

**Duties:**

As part of the Teaching Assistant Program in France organized by Centre International d'Études Pédagogiques (CIEP - French Ministry of Education) and the Cultural Service of the French Embassy in Canada, I worked as an English teacher in a French lycée (high school) from September 2009-June 2010. My role was to work with students on improving their oral fluency in English. I planned lessons to engage students and stimulate conversation and created an environment where students felt safe to practice and develop their skills, including eating lunch with students, providing more a casual atmosphere. I maintained a level of control in classrooms of over forty students by nurturing mutual respect through thorough preparation, leading discussions, and being attentive to all students.



## **IV Professional Development in Teaching**

### **Workshops**

As part of working for Lycée Gambetta as an English teacher, I attended three workshops in order to improve my teaching skills. The topics of these workshops were classroom management, collaboration among peers, and inclusion. Classroom management refers to the process by which teachers create and maintain a productive learning environment. Key aspects to classroom management are preparation and definition of clear boundaries between students and teachers; being prepared allows for a smooth lecture with few breaks, and keeping students engaged while defining clear boundaries helps to command respect in the classroom.

The workshop on collaborating with peers showed us the benefits of sharing ideas and working alongside other faculty members. Many aspects of classroom management are honed over years of experience; seeking advice from senior faculty members can provide useful ideas as how to teach certain concepts. Furthermore, collaborating with other faculty members helps to maintain consistency between courses. Knowing the concepts covered will reduce the variability of material taught between sections. Being familiar with concepts taught in pre-requisite courses, specifically areas of difficulty, will help structure the course material to facilitate learning. Similarly, knowing the expectations of upper year courses, allows you to properly prepare students for their future studies. Collaboration improves the confidence of students as they know they are receiving the appropriate training.

The third workshop dealt with inclusionary teaching, methods in differentiated instruction, which enable teaching to different learning styles. As educators, we wish to increase the accessibility to the material we are teaching. In order to accommodate all students, we must adapt to their learning styles. I found the lessons in this workshop have helped me to work with international students who may not have strong English skills but are otherwise capable of understanding the material. Approaching problems from multiple angles or changing the medium to present the information helps students find what method works best for them to better learn the material.

## **V Teaching Goals**

My goal as an educator is to continually improve my ability to teach economic concepts. In the short-term, I will take courses and discuss teaching with seasoned educators. I will continue to network at events and meet individuals whom I may recruit as guest speakers. In the long-term, I plan to attend teaching conferences on pedagogical research to learn state-of-the-art teaching techniques. This will ensure that my teaching style evolves to utilize new technologies and engage future generations of students. I look forward to teaching my own research in public policy and econometrics.

## **A Supporting Materials**

### **1 Reference Letters**

October 8, 2015

Re: Luc Clair

While I have known Mr. Clair only a short while, I am delighted to act as a referee on his behalf. Mr. Clair was a dedicated, enthusiastic TA for my Intermediate Microeconomics and Economics of Professional Sports courses in Summer Term, 2015. Mr. Clair was required to prepare and lead weekly one-hour tutorials in both courses. He was responsible for presenting review lectures to roughly 120 microeconomics students and 180 sports economic students.

While I did not monitor his classes in person, I can attest to student comments about Mr. Clair's teaching. The students really liked Mr. Clair and thought he was very clear, knowledgeable and very professional. From my observations, I can attest that Mr. Clair is thoughtful, industrious and creative and never once disappointed me as his supervisor.

I have no doubt whatsoever that Mr. Clair will make an excellent instructor, and I recommend him highly.

Please note that I am currently on research leave; the brevity of my endorsement of Mr. Clair is a reflection of a time crunch on my part. Feel free to contact me if you would like more information.



Hannah Holmes

Assistant Professor, Economics

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