Peter Courtney: Teaching Statement

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I have taught at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, where in 2026 I designed and taught the seminars for two groups in Institutional Economics in the bachelor's programme in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Here I focused on "modern Malthusians" and looked at how population and resource scarcity have been and are currently thought about. I also ran a seminar on land, land tax and Henry George. The engagement was excellent, as we dealt directly with the housing crisis, something that seemed to resonate. I have supervised four bachelor's theses in economics and second-assessed a master's thesis. In 2022 I was the teaching assistant for Nic Spaull's postgraduate course in the Economics of Education at Stellenbosch University. I designed the weekly practicals, in which students analysed both administrative data and large-scale assessment data, such as PIRLS. I ran the sessions and graded the work. In 2018, at the University of Cape Town, I tutored two courses in philosophy, Introduction to Philosophy and Ethics, in weekly groups of about 25. These teaching environments have been incredibly diverse, both within and between institutions. I care deeply about getting real engagement from students and always seek to help them not only pass the assessments but see how the material directly applies to the world around them.

I also teach on a broader level, outside the classroom. I have trained enumerator teams twice for J-PAL Africa. They surveyed more than 5,000 children, using paper-based surveys that I designed to be digitised using only WhatsApp pictures. I now supervise a research assistant. I have also worked on scripts for the economics YouTube channel, Money & Macro, which gets hundreds of thousands of views.

It has been a thrill to watch students who do not think of themselves as mathematically inclined visualise and explore data and build real confidence in what they are able to understand of the world through the methods that define our discipline. The Stellenbosch students taught me that the quickest way in is a picture, a pattern, of the data that tells a real story before an estimating equation gets it precise. I hope to build a master's methods course in which students first generate the data, then visualise it, measure it, and model it. For example, they might simulate how richer parents choose better schools, plot the result and measure how their naive comparison overstates what the schools add. Because they built the data themselves, they know what the schools really add and can intuitively check how the model works. I work mainly in R, have taught with Stata and also use Python, and am happy to teach in any of them.

I am very happy to teach standard courses, such as microeconomics, statistics and econometrics, and field courses in development economics, the economics of education, political economy and institutional economics.