Irina Panovska Teaching Statement

Teaching Experience Summary

I have had the privilege of teaching classes at all levels. At the University of Texas at Dallas I have taught five classes: Intermediate Macroeconomics (Econ 3311, required class), Forecasting for Business and Economics at the undergraduate (Econ 4395) and Master's level (Econ 5397, a new MS level class that I added to the university catalog in spring 2020), Contemporary Macroeconomic Policy at the advanced undergraduate level (Econ 4386, new class that I added in fall 2021), the first-year first-semester core PhD macroeconomics class (Econ 6302), and a field PhD class on Business Cycles (Econ 7391, a new field class that I added in fall 2020). At Lehigh University I also taught Money and Banking, Time Series Analysis, and the Federal Reserve Challenge. As a PhD student at Washington University in St Louis, I taught statistics for graduate students in economics as a summer bootcamp class. In addition to regular classroom instruction, I have experience teaching experiential learning classes: at Lehigh University I taught the Federal Reserve Challenge class, and my Contemporary Macroeconomic Policy Class at UT Dallas entails a Virtual Exchange collaborative learning project (VE COIL) with students from the University of Marburg in Marburg Germany.

My teaching evaluation scores at UT Dallas have an overall average score of 4.96 out of 5 across all the classes that I have taught since my arrival at the University in Fall 2019. In Spring 2023 I won the School of Economic, Political, and Policy Sciences (EPPS) Award for Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching. When I was an Assistant Professor at Lehigh University, I also held an endowed position 2017-2019 that was awarded to me for excellence in teaching and mentorship.

During my time at UT Dallas, I have been a speaker at four different Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Workshops. Two of my presentations were by invitation where I talked about my Virtual Exchange (VE COIL) collaboration at CTL workshops focused on VE COIL in Spring 2024 and Fall 2024. The other two were at all-campus workshops where my presentation proposal to discuss innovations that I implemented in my classes was selected through a competitive CTL review process. I was one of the speakers at the Center for Teaching and Learning Lessons from COVID virtual workshop that was held on March 5th, 2021. In that workshop I shared my strategies for using mini background lectures and mini quizzes in advanced classes and in classes where students have different career and educational goals. On February 21st, 2025, I presented at the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) all-campus teaching workshop where I discussed how I used the VE COIL project to enhance the students' hard and soft marketable skills.

I also serve on the School of Economic, Political, and Policy Sciences' Teaching Effectiveness Committee. This service not only helps EPPS and our colleagues by providing all of us with peer feedback on our teaching, but it also helps me learn about the new tools that my coworkers are incorporating in their classes across the curriculum.

Teaching philosophy and examples of incorporating my philosophy in my classes

Economics provides us with collections of equations that we can use for modelling and predicting the economy, but it also provides us with a language that allows us to communicate and to think more easily about our day-to-day lives. Every time I step in front of my students, I am not only teaching economics, but I am also training future business owners, policy makers, and executives who use will those concepts in their lives. Therefore, my classes always have two broad goals. First, I aim to make my students better economists. In addition to focusing on how each topic fits within the context of a specific class, I highlight how the concepts covered in class relate to policy and business decisions and to current events.

Second, I emphasize transferable skills that they can use in all aspects of their lives such as analytics and communication. I strongly believe that learning how to integrate information and utilize transferable skills is an integral part of higher education. An added benefit of explicitly emphasizing integrative and transferable skills is that this goal directly aligns with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 60x30TX Plan to provide job skills and marketable skills to students.

To achieve these two goals, in all my classes the students are asked to complete a series of hands-on individualized assignments that build on each other for which they collect data, develop an economic model, and summarize the findings for different audiences (peers, economic experts, general audiences with no background in economics). Of course, the assignments are scaled depending on the level of the class. In intermediate undergraduate classes I use short exercises focused on basic patterns in macroeconomic data, in PhD field classes the students write an academic research paper. However, the underlying principles are the same: how can we take the equations and the data we study as economists and translate them to understand the real-world implications of economic models? This approach is particularly useful for students who are new to economics because it makes abstract concepts more tangible, and it also helps the students build up their confidence when it comes to data analytics and communication. Below I include a few specific examples of how I use this approach.

In Spring 2020 I added **Forecasting for Business and Economics (4385, cross-listed as Econ 5397),** offered at the undergraduate and at the MS level. While Econ 4385 was in the university catalog, it had not been offered in more than a decade. The current version of the class is a redesigned new class that covers contemporary forecasting methods in economics and includes an introduction to machine learning. Students complete a sequence of assignments that look at topics such as predicting loan defaults, predicting inflation, evaluating the effects of policy changes on volatility and returns, and they are exposed to programming languages and real data sets from the very first day of class. They also complete an original economics research project or a business case study at the end of the semester. The graduate version of the class (Econ 5397) requires an independent project and a research presentation. Econ 5397 expanded the short list of electives offered to the MS students in economics who are interested in data analytics, and it is also part of the Graduate Certificate in International Banking and Monetary Systems.

In fall 2021 I introduced **Contemporary Macroeconomic Policy (Econ 4386, offered under topics number 4396 in Fall 2021)**. The class explores modern theoretical models in economics, the use of economic data sets, and emphasizes communicating complex economic findings to different audiences. In Fall 2023 and in Fall 2024 I also incorporated a Virtual Exchange/ Collaborative Online International Learning Project **(VE COIL)** in my Econ 4386 class with students from the University of Marburg in Marburg, Germany. We plan to repeat this collaboration in Fall 2025. The students collaborate on a joint project that explores how economic policy can change the relationship between macroeconomic aggregates across different countries, and they use their analytical skills to construct economic projections. The collaboration culminates with a group project presentation that discusses economic policies, challenges, and projections. The students who completed the project in Fall 2024 were eligible to receive a digital resume badge through the UTD office of micro-credentialing. In Spring 2024 I was a presenter at the CTL VE COIL showcase where I talked about my VE COIL project to colleagues interested in implementing VE COIL in their classes. In February 2025 I will present at the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) all-campus teaching workshop where I will discuss how I used the VE COIL project to enhance the students' hard and soft marketable skills.

At the graduate level, I introduced the field **PhD class on Business Cycles (Econ 7391)**. I have been the primary PhD advisor for three PhD students who study business cycles who used the concepts from the class to develop their research, and I have served as a committee member for three more students.

Additional examples of teaching excellence: What happens after the semester is over?

Going beyond my evaluation scores, teaching presentations and teaching awards, I am confident that my students are leaving the classroom equipped with the skills they need to succeed as economists. I am particularly proud that my students have been able to directly leverage the skills they learned both in industry jobs and in policy and academic research. There are three steps to the learning process: the first happens in the classroom when I teach; the second part happens when the students apply the skills they learned on their homework or exams. The third, and most important part happens after they complete a course, when they apply the skills from my class in more advanced classes or in their work. While the teaching evaluations proxy how well I have accomplished the first two steps, my students' progress in more advanced classes and in their jobs and postgraduate studies shows that they are also retaining the information they learned in my class and that they have remained intellectually curious about macroeconomics.

Many students have used the final projects in their job application portfolios as writing and research samples. A non-exhaustive list of placements for students who have used their Econ 4385, Econ 4386 or Econ 5397 projects in their job or graduate school portfolios includes: financial forecaster at Fidelity (spring 2021), economist at the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (two students 2020, 2024), internship at the Farm Credit Administration to evaluate risk (2021), forecaster for Southwest Airlines (several students, 2022). Multiple other students accepted offers to PhD programs where they focus on quantitative methods, a topic they first encountered in my class. In Spring 2024, one student used the skills from Econ 5397 to obtain a promotion from an Analyst to a Senior Analyst focusing on Macroeconomic Conditions at her employer (a large US bank). Another student started a position as a Statistics Analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas in Spring 2024 and was later promoted to a Statistics Analyst II in Spring 2025 based on the skills he learned in my classes. The student followed up with me (feedback shared with the student's permission): "

"I did want to tell you that I ended up doing a presentation on the Taylor Rule for my department in January, and the lessons from your Contemporary Macroeconomic Policy course were integral for putting it together. It was beneficial that the class also focused on delivering economic models to different audiences, as the audience for the presentation included those with economic backgrounds and others who did not. I received compliments on presenting the topic in an understandable way for both audiences and feel like the course helped improve that skill. Thank you!"

I look forward to continuing to incorporate research and data analytics and a holistic approach to learning in all my classes, from the graduate level methods classes to undergraduate introductory classes, and I look forward to my students' continued success.