Teaching Statement — Jin Seok Park

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Economics, to me, is a discipline that connects rigorous models with empirical reality. I view theory and data as complements—models give structure to our reasoning, while data bring those ideas to life. This belief shapes both my research and my teaching. I strive to help students move beyond memorizing models toward using economic reasoning and empirical tools to understand how the world actually works. When students approach real problems—such as housing affordability, inequality, or labor-market dynamics—through both conceptual and data-driven thinking, they begin to see economics not just as a set of equations but as a framework for making sense of society. I am particularly interested in teaching courses in **Urban and Labor Economics, Applied Microeconomics, and Econometrics**, where students apply these ideas to real data and policy issues across cities, labor markets, and households.

Teaching Philosophy

My approach to teaching combines three principles: conceptual clarity, active and inclusive learning, and empirical engagement.

Conceptual clarity. Students must understand why a model exists before they can use it effectively. I present ideas through relatable stories and debates that link theory to daily experience—a practice I adopted from Professor Matthew Kahn's *Urban Economics* lectures at USC. When discussing agglomeration or housing supply, I ask why Los Angeles rents are high or why certain neighborhoods thrive. Framing abstract ideas around real phenomena helps students internalize intuition before approaching equations or data.

Active and inclusive learning. I build classes around guided inquiry and discussion rather than passive note-taking. Students challenge assumptions, share perspectives, and connect theory to lived experience. Research and teaching are complementary: incorporating recent empirical work—including my studies on housing affordability, entrepreneurship, and labor markets—shows how data-driven methods generate policy insights. Students' perspectives, in turn, often spark new research ideas, reminding me that classrooms are spaces of mutual learning.

Empirical engagement. Data is where economic reasoning meets reality. I encourage students to treat data not as a technical tool but as part of economic reasoning itself. Exercises in visualization or regression analysis show that data is both evidence and a language economists use to think and communicate. I want students to leave class confident in evaluating evidence and viewing economics as a living empirical discipline.

Teaching Experience

At the University of Southern California, I have served as a teaching assistant for several undergraduate courses, including *Urban Economics* (with Professor Matthew Kahn), *Principles*

of Microeconomics, *Intermediate Microeconomic Theory*, *Money, Credit, and Banking*, and *Introduction to Statistics for Economics*. Working with multiple professors has exposed me to diverse pedagogical styles and taught me to adapt to students with different backgrounds and motivations.

In *Urban Economics*, I led weekly discussion sections linking models to real-world issues. I designed quizzes and contributed to exams but focused mainly on helping students think empirically about urban and labor-market challenges—how housing affordability affects mobility or how policies shape neighborhood growth. Guiding students through data-based projects showed how empirical work brings theory to life. Collaborating with Professor Kahn was formative, as it aligned with my research on cities, housing, and labor outcomes. Effective teaching, I learned, means helping students articulate assumptions, test evidence, and refine reasoning—much like research itself.

In *Principles of Microeconomics*, I led review sessions for large lectures. Students consistently rated my teaching highly (3.5–4.0 out of 4), noting that solving problems together and connecting theories to daily examples improved understanding. I also supported courses that introduced econometric reasoning in applied contexts, which strengthened my ability to connect theory and data across fields. Before joining USC, I worked as a teaching assistant at Yonsei University for courses in mathematical economics, game theory, and market design. This early experience built my foundation in clear communication and structured guidance. Beyond formal teaching, I value mentoring students on research design, data work, and graduate study preparation.

Future Teaching Goals

Looking ahead, I aim to teach **Urban, Labor, and Applied Microeconomics**, as well as introductory and econometrics courses. I plan to develop project-based classes where students replicate or extend empirical research using open data and reproducible methods. For example, an upper-level course could include a semester project testing hypotheses about housing, labor, or entrepreneurship using datasets such as Zillow or the Census. These projects teach students to analyze data, interpret results, and connect empirical evidence to theory.

Over time, I hope to establish a **community data lab** connecting students with local governments and organizations. There, students could conduct hands-on analysis of issues like affordability, labor mobility, and inequality while producing insights useful to the community. This experiential approach promotes civic engagement and evidence-based reasoning—helping students see economics as both an analytical and social discipline.

Ultimately, I want my students to combine theory, data, and curiosity to make sense of a complex world. My goal is for them to leave class not only with technical competence but with the confidence to ask meaningful questions, evaluate evidence critically, and apply economic reasoning to improve the societies they live in. That, to me, is the true purpose of teaching economics.