

Thomas Yu

Teaching Statement

My teaching rests on three principles: clarity and structure, so that students build confidence as they tackle complex ideas; curiosity and critical thinking, so that they question assumptions and connect economics to their own lives; and an inclusive classroom, where every student feels supported and comfortable asking questions, sharing ideas, and making mistakes. My goal is to move students beyond memorization toward genuine understanding and interest.

Teaching experience. I have been a Teaching Fellow at Yale for five semesters in three undergraduate microeconomics courses: Introductory Microeconomics (Spring 2024 and Fall 2024), Intermediate Microeconomics (Fall 2023 and Spring 2025), and Game Theory (Fall 2025). In each, I led weekly discussion sections, held office hours, and ran final exam reviews. I also completed Yale's Certificate of College Teaching Preparation: nine teaching workshops, two learning communities on grading and inclusive classrooms, and four classroom observations.

How I teach. Every class starts with a roadmap, and every concept with intuition before notation. Once a model is on the board, I ask students where they have seen it in their own lives; when a student explained rising marginal cost with the crowded counter at his bakery, the whole room got it. That exchange only happens if students are willing to speak up, so I wait longer than feels natural and follow up with anyone who leaves still unsure. I am always looking for ways to improve: when observers noted that I sometimes answered before finding the source of confusion, I began asking students to restate ideas in their own words. My sections became more interactive, and students grew more willing to voice uncertainty and work through ideas together.

I design much of my own teaching material. My solution guides explain why each step is needed, pair every derivation with intuition and visuals, and offer more than one route to each answer so every student can find one that works. For exam reviews, I prepare slides that summarize the course and then solve example problems live, so students see how a solution is built.

In teaching evaluations, one student wrote that I was “easily one of the strongest parts of this course” and that my “weekly sections were far more helpful than the lectures.” Another wrote that I “would keep explaining the idea until I really grasped the concept” and added, “If there’s a TF/TA award or prize, I nominate him for it!” A student from my first section later wrote, unprompted, to thank me for my “patient and kind teaching style” and for “a great experience in my first economics class.” A teaching consultant who observed my section wrote that students were “very comfortable speaking up and asking questions, even questions they thought might be silly.”

What I can teach. I am prepared to teach a wide range of courses, including microeconomic theory, game theory, industrial organization, health economics, and econometrics, at any level, undergraduate or graduate. I also welcome advising PhD students and senior thesis writers in these and related areas. I am especially excited to teach two courses I have designed in full. The first, an introductory applied microeconomics course, replaces lectures with discussion, case studies, and weekly data labs with real datasets, and ends with a policy memo that students may revise and resubmit. The second, an advanced health economics seminar, centers on student-led policy seminars, exploration of health care data, and a research proposal.