

My teaching fields are microeconomic theory, political economy, and economic history. During my time at Tulane University, I have taught across the Ph.D., master's, and undergraduate levels. For the economics department, these include the first Ph.D.-level course in the microeconomic theory sequence, a mixed undergraduate- and master's-level game theory course, a mixed undergraduate- and master's-level mathematical economics course, and the undergraduate economic history of the U.S. For the Murphy Institute's undergraduate political economy (PE) major, I have also taught the undergraduate positive PE course, a major seminar course in authoritarian politics, and a major seminar course in historical political economy. In addition to my teaching, I regularly mentor students as an advisor and provide letters of recommendation and guidance for students on the job market or seeking to pursue further study in economics and political economy.

Teaching Philosophy. My teaching philosophy rests on three core principles. First, I employ *diverse teaching methods* to engage different learning styles, blending abstract models with real-world applications. My courses are often theory-dense, so I design detailed slides, interspersing them with example-driven interludes that spark in-class dialogue as well as ideas for research beyond the classroom. Students often use these slides as a resource for reviewing lectures and previous example questions as a course progresses.

Second, I structure my curricula around chapters, articles, and stories that chronicle the *history of thought* for a given topic. Charting the progression of scholarly debates to present day offers compelling narratives about scientific progress and where future research is headed. For example, in my mathematical economics course, I show how advances in quantitative methods corresponded to shifts in the philosophy of economics over time.

Third, I practice *hands-on learning* by incorporating interactive components into each course. My undergraduate lecture-based courses (e.g., economic history of the U.S.) feature frequent extra credit activities, in the form of polls and pop quizzes, as well as small-group activities and group writing assignments. All of these serve to increase student engagement with the material. My discussion-based courses, meanwhile, also require an in-class presentation from each student, which is graded in part on how much discussion it generates.

Teaching Outcomes. These principles have yielded strong student outcomes and positive feedback. Across my economics and political economy courses since 2023, my overall class and lecturer ratings have averaged 4.79 and 4.66 (out of 5), respectively. Students consistently highlight both the clarity of my teaching and the accessibility of my mentoring. Many also seek me out for advising, recommendation letters, and guidance on research and graduate study, which I view as among the most rewarding aspects of my role. Some specific comments I have received from students are as follows:

"I've had Professor Testa before as a professor, and to put it concisely, he is a fantastic

professor and his classes are always interesting.” (Economic History in the U.S., Spring 2025)

“It’s very hard to believe that Professor Testa has never taught this course before. He has such a fundamental understanding of the (very deep) concepts he’s teaching, that it’s almost frightening sometimes. He will introduce a concept and then, all in one breath, relate it back to everything we’ve learned up to that point. He moves fast, but he repeats himself frequently and stops for questions periodically.... It’s clear that Professor Testa’s primary goal is to give the class as fundamental an understanding of economics as possible in as short a time as possible, and he has a real talent for doing so.” (Mathematical Economics, Spring 2022)

“Professor Testa presented the course material in a clear and organized way! I feel like I learned a wide variety of new information, and I was always excited to go to this class.” (Positive Political Economy, Fall 2025)

“I found the subject of Game Theory to be very difficult, but I felt that Professor Testa made this course interesting and effective overall. I very much appreciated his flexibility while we’ve all been dealing with COVID-19, and found his management of classes and assignments to be very fair. I have also appreciated his accessibility to students looking for more help.” (Game Theory, Fall 2020)

“The class structure was very organized, and we always knew what to expect each week. I also enjoyed how he made the class a safe space to share ideas and made every student feel like their voice mattered equally.” (Political Economy in Historical Perspective, Fall 2024)

“Professor [Testa] not only states the theorems, but talk[s] about how the theorems locate in the whole microeconomics major and even in the whole economics research as well.” (Advanced Price Theory I, Fall 2021)

I have also received many valuable critiques from students along the way, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic period. For instance:

“You can tell that Patrick Testa is a very smart and passionate professor, but at the same time, it was also clear that he is fresh out of grad school. Professor Testa’s teaching method consisted exclusively of rewriting his notes on the white board and erasing them for 75 minutes. This teaching style proved to be hard-to-follow and not always engaging, especially when you consider all of the tools that 21st century professors have available to them.” (Positive Political Economy, Fall 2019)

Comments like that were instrumental in guiding the development of my teaching philosophy above, especially during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in me using slides for the first time ever. Even that, however, was subject to trial and error. For instance:

“[A]ttending class was entirely pointless as Professor Testa almost exclusively reads off the Powerpoint.” (Positive Political Economy, Fall 2020)

Feedback like that proved useful as I pursued a more balanced approach thereafter, using Latex instead of Powerpoint for math slides, while also using the white board or a stylus to interact with slides in real time. This improvement is reflected in subsequent reviews I’ve received, which were favorable toward my more interactive lecture style, as well as my effort to increase the non-lecture component of my courses:

“It was great that lecture notes were available on Canvas.” (Economic History in the U.S., Spring 2025)

“I appreciated how he tried to incorporate interactive elements because a lot of the material can be kind of dense. I also felt that the exams were very fair and that he prepared us very well for them.” (Positive Political Economy, Spring 2025)

“[S]tudent presentations were really helpful.” (Political Economy of Nondemocracy, Spring 2022)

Practice makes better, though never perfect. More recently, as I have become rather practiced in teaching certain courses (e.g., PECN 3010), I have received some feedback that my pace can at times be a bit quick, e.g.:

“At times, Dr. Testa went through the slides pretty fast which could make it tough to take notes in class.” (Mathematical Economics, Fall 2024)

Reading comments like that helps me stay mindful that there is always room for improvement.

In addition to establishing a great rapport with my students in the classroom, I also correspond regularly with many of them outside of the classroom, including in person, over Zoom, and by email, often to chat about ideas or potential careers in economics. The latter is a particular passion of mine, which I have channeled into the creation and administration of the Tulane economics department’s “Internship & Career Opportunities” page on the department website. The creation of this resource in the summer of 2021 was inspired by a series of conversations with two advisees of mine, who lamented the lack of an economics-specific resource for career development at the time. My advisees continue to serve as a valuable source of feedback for me as a teacher, as I learn about the needs and trajectories of my students through my meetings with them. Indeed, I have already served as major advisor to dozens of economics students, and as of fall 2025, I am actively the major advisor of 19 students. I have also served as informal advisor (e.g., written letters of recommendation) to many others, and I have been the honors thesis chair or co-chair to seven students. I am very fortunate to have gotten to know so many excellent students throughout my career, who inarguably guide me as much as I guide them.