

Teaching Statement

Nara Chung · Ph.D. Candidate & Graduate Teaching Instructor, Department of Economics,
Colorado State University

Teaching Philosophy

My interest in teaching began outside of economics. As a freshman in college, I searched for a more ultimate purpose in life and found myself confronting a single question: what is eternal? Working through that question convinced me that human beings are eternal, and that helping others is among the greatest values a person can pursue. That conviction drew me toward education, and I went on to earn a master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) before eventually returning to economics.

My teaching philosophy is student-centered: I aim to replace one-way lecturing with active engagement that gives students repeated opportunities to test their own understanding, in a classroom where it is safe to struggle and improve. This approach has been shaped in part by the work of senior Ph.D. students in our department, including the use of flipped learning and the integration of in-class activities (ICAs), both of which influenced my own teaching in ECON 204.

In my first semester as a Graduate Teaching Instructor, I focused heavily on providing more knowledge to students by adding more lecture notes, and I often found myself rushing through slides in a one-way communication. Students' poor exam performance and their feedback revealed that traditional lecturing limited their opportunities to interact with the material and assess their own understanding in real time. My experience as a TA for Jeremy's class, where ICAs were used effectively, inspired me to adopt them in my own classroom as a deliberate shift toward active learning.

ICAs now play a central role in my teaching. Students work in pairs or small groups to answer targeted questions during lecture, reinforcing concepts through discussion. At times, I assign ICA questions on material not yet covered in class to create a flipped-learning moment that primes students before I formally introduce a topic. A distinctive component of my approach is requiring in-person ICA submission during office hours: this policy regularly fills the entire 90-minute office-hours block with student engagement and gives me a direct, low-stakes way to check understanding of key concepts before exams.

In teaching economics specifically, I believe it is important for students to verify theoretical concepts using empirical data rather than encountering them only in the abstract. For this reason, I value assignments such as the group project in ECON 204, in which students choose a country to compare against the United States and analyze empirical data on a range of macroeconomic variables. Students first learn a concept during lecture and then apply it directly by gathering the relevant data themselves and presenting their analysis in figures — connecting theory to evidence in a way that mirrors how economists actually work.

I also treat my own teaching as something to iterate on using the same evidence I ask of my students. This semester, by reducing unnecessary slide content, I have elaborated more, asked more questions, and illustrated concepts on the board rather than reading through slides. I now offer virtual meetings for ICA submission to accommodate students who cannot attend in person, and I have adjusted course structure mid-semester in direct response to student feedback — changes that students specifically noticed and credited with improving the course (see below). These adjustments have made the course more accessible, interactive, and effective, and they reflect a philosophy in which teaching is revised continuously against evidence of what is and is not working for students.

Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness

Student Evaluation Ratings

The tables below summarize course-evaluation results across every section for which quantitative survey data is available, from my first semester as a recitation leader through my most recent semester as instructor of record, reported as the share of students who rated each dimension a strength of the course, or who indicated the corresponding practice met their needs.

ECON 204 Recitations, Fall 2022 (Sections R13, R14, R15 combined) — $n = 22$

Evaluation Dimension	Result
Support from Instructor	100% strength
Accessibility and usefulness of course materials	100% strength
Timing of instructor feedback	91% strength (100% “timely”)
Instructor communication	100% strength
Inclusive learning environment	100% strength
Instructor’s contribution to learning	95% reported impact

ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2) — $n = 41$

Evaluation Dimension	Result
Support from Instructor	85% strength
Accessibility and usefulness of course materials	80% strength
Timing of instructor feedback	78% strength (85% “timely”)
Instructor communication	73% strength
Inclusive learning environment	90% strength
Instructor’s contribution to learning	80% reported impact

ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3) — $n = 73$

Evaluation Dimension	Result
Support from Instructor	86% strength
Accessibility and usefulness of course materials	89% strength
Timing of instructor feedback	85% strength (86% “timely”)
Instructor communication	81% strength
Inclusive learning environment	84% strength
Instructor’s contribution to learning	84% reported impact

Evaluation Dimension	Result
Support from Instructor	92% strength
Accessibility and usefulness of course materials	89% strength
Timing of instructor feedback	88% strength (88% “timely”)
Instructor communication	87% strength
Inclusive learning environment	84% strength
Instructor’s contribution to learning	83% reported impact

These ratings reflect consistently strong marks across recitation and lecture teaching alike, from my earliest recitation sections as a GTA (Fall 2022) through my most recent semester as instructor of record (Spring 2026). Instructor-communication and feedback-timing scores improved notably between my first semester as lecture instructor of record (Spring 2025) and Spring 2026, consistent with the iterative changes described above.

Faculty Recommendation and Peer Observation

Nomination Letter for the Department’s Graduate Teaching Award

In a March 2023 letter nominating me for the department’s Graduate Teaching Award based on my recitation teaching for ECON 204 in Fall 2022, Dr. Ray Miller wrote:

“Although Nara is only a second-year student, he has excelled as a GTA. Nara was my GTA in 204 during fall semester 2022. He was exceptional in his duties as a grader and participant in lectures and GTA meetings. But where he truly shined was in leading recitations. I have observed each of my GTAs during recitation over the previous several years, and it is not hyperbole to say Nara’s recitation was the most impressive I have seen. He was very organized and engaged with the students. You can tell he worked hard in preparation but also that he is just a natural teacher.”

— Ray Miller, PhD, Assistant Professor of Economics — Nomination letter, March 2023

The letter also cited student comments from that recitation’s course evaluations:

- *“Nara knew what he was talking about and came prepared. Nara explained things in different ways, so the answers were clear. He gave students time to figure out some of the economic questions before diving into the answers.” — ECON 204 recitation, Fall 2022*
- *“Nara was a wonderful instructor and one of the most inclusive/welcoming professors/TAs that I have had in my college career.” — ECON 204 recitation, Fall 2022*
- *“Nara is amazing. The best TA I have ever had. Anyone taking his class will walk out better. He is great at what he does and such an amazing dude.” — ECON 204 recitation, Fall 2022*
- *“You’re the greatest TA I’ve ever had and will likely ever have. You care for your students and want them to succeed and grasp the concepts. You’re one of the main reasons I have a solid grade in Macroeconomics. Thank you!” — ECON 204 recitation, Fall 2022*

Graduate Teaching Mentor Observation

As part of the same nomination, Dr. Miller formally observed one of my ECON 204 recitations (Week 6, AD/AS model) and wrote the following in his Graduate Teaching Mentor Observation report:

“Very clear introduction. Nice breaking them into groups right away to work on questions on their own for a few minutes, and very clear that you would be walking around to help and check in on how things are going. Great job knowing students’ names and using them! Really nice job getting the students to interact with each other in small groups (in my experience this has been difficult for many GTAs), and an excellent job walking around during the small group work, checking in and asking questions. You are a natural teacher! Really great job — one of the best recitation sessions I’ve observed.”

— Ray Miller, PhD — Graduate Teaching Mentor Observation, ECON 204 recitation, Fall 2022

The sections below draw on the full record of student comments across every section I have taught, from Fall 2022 through Spring 2026, organized by theme.

Student Comments

The comments below are drawn from student evaluations across every course section I have taught to date: ECON 204 (Principles of Macroeconomics) recitation sections R13, R14, and R15, Fall 2022; ECON 204, Spring 2025 lecture sections 2 and 3 and recitation section R04; ECON 212 (Racial Inequality and Discrimination), Summer 2025; and ECON 204, Spring 2026.

Engagement Through Active Learning

- *“Always wanted students to participate with each other and asked many guiding questions to help our understanding.” — ECON 204 Recitation R15, Fall 2022*
- *“Nara provided a great learning environment, I learned a lot in his recitation.” — ECON 204 Recitation R13, Fall 2022*

“I really enjoyed the learning environment; I was very appreciative of the in-class activities that were due for extra credit. This course worried me at first if I would do well, but after you made the adjustments, I could take a breath.”

— ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)

- *“It is very helpful to have the professor go over in-class activities during office hours. However, it would be more effective to have the in-class activity cover material from the previous lecture so that it serves as a review as well.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)*
- *“I really enjoyed having the in-class activities, and I hope he continues doing those in his future classes as it helped me better understand what was being lectured.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)*
- *“I enjoyed this class a lot. The lectures were clear and there was a good amount of work.” — ECON 204, Spring 2026*

Instructor Support, Expectations, and Care

“Nara is great. I didn’t go to many recitations this semester, but anytime I had a question or problem I could message Nara and he would answer quickly and helpfully. Passionate about giving his students the best opportunity to succeed. Definitely the best TA I’ve had at CSU.”

— ECON 204 Recitation R13, Fall 2022

- *“Nara really cares about the success of all of his students and I have been lucky to have him as a teacher.” — ECON 204 Recitation R13, Fall 2022*
- *“Wants students to succeed and helps them do so.” — ECON 204 Recitation R13, Fall 2022*
- *“Nara expects us to bring any questions we have from lecture to the recitations. Nara aims to clear up any confusion we might have.” — ECON 204 Recitation R14, Fall 2022*
- *“Wants us to understand the subject that happened in the lecture and wants us to succeed.” — ECON 204 Recitation R14, Fall 2022*
- *“I felt that Nara held high expectations for us to learn the content as well as being an active participant at recitation.” — ECON 204 Recitation R15, Fall 2022*

“The professor is honestly great. Dr. Nara Chung really cares about the academic success of all students, and that’s something I really respect. Take for example Exam 2: there were some students (myself included) who didn’t fully understand the content leading up to the exam and did rather poorly. Dr. Chung ensured the following Tuesday during lecture to walk everyone through how to review missed questions in Gradescope so we could identify our weak areas and actually learn from our mistakes. On top of that, he offered a retake for anyone who scored below an 80%. That kind of approach shows that Dr. Chung is not just focused on grades, but on making sure students actually understand the material.”

— ECON 204, Spring 2026

“This instructor is exceptional and wants everyone to be successful. He really does give you all the tools in your toolbox to do well. He wants the best for everyone and his learning style is awesome.”

— ECON 204, Spring 2026

“Amazing instructor, I would have him again in a heartbeat. Always willing to help and ensure that I got my accommodations correctly.”

— ECON 204, Spring 2026

- *“Nara is a phenomenal professor who cares a lot about his students!” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)*
- *“He wants everyone to succeed — like with the project, there were some missing gaps and flaws in a lot of them, but he gave us respectful yet critical feedback to help us in the future.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)*
- *“Reasonable expectations. Doesn’t expect everyone to know everything, has a good attitude, and tries to make sure we understand the lectures clearly.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*

- “Reasonable expectations and very willing to help if you do not understand.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “He wants everyone to understand each topic and provides plenty of resources to do so.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “Nara’s expectations are very reasonable and he gives plenty of opportunities for students to succeed.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “I feel that Nara Chung is a huge part of why this learning environment is so great! Nara’s eagerness to explain in a way that is easy to understand makes a challenging course more palatable.” — ECON 204, Spring 2026

Quality and Timeliness of Feedback

- “The feedback is always quick and helpful.” — ECON 204 Recitation R13, Fall 2022
- “The feedback was great, always have opportunities for support.” — ECON 204 Recitation R13, Fall 2022
- “The amount of feedback is good.” — ECON 204 Recitation R14, Fall 2022
- “I felt the feedback offered whenever I went and got help was helpful.” — ECON 204 Recitation R15, Fall 2022
- “The feedback was good, he made extra office hours available if needed, and he responded quick for the most part.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)
- “I think the feedback I got for my group’s presentation was well done, it was reasonable, and I could understand what was wrong, but what was done well too. I also liked the feedback we would get during recitation.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)
- “I think we go over everything in a timely manner and get grades back quickly.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)
- “I feel like it was good. If you took the time and effort to go to office hours and get help it was given to you right away.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “Not much to improve. Nara is very timely and quick to reply.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “Feedback is given in a timely manner, and no changes really need to be made.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “The timing of feedback is okay as is. Professor Chung is pretty good with communication, and very helpful at office hours.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “Any feedback from going to office hours helped immensely.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “I think it’s good as is. There’s activities for extra credit that you take to office hours which you can get feedback on and ask questions.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “I liked the class activity extra credit.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “I think to get a good amount of personalized feedback you must go to office hours.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)
- “Feedback was great, Nara was always there for us.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Recitation R04)

- *“I would say the biggest strength of this class comes from the professor and the comments about the assignments that they graded. It was very detailed and straight to the point.” — ECON 212, Summer 2025*
- *“I think that the feedback was enough; it was very detailed and specific. I would say that this is a model example of what feedback should look like in every class.” — ECON 212, Summer 2025*

Responsiveness and Growth Across Semesters

“Nara was a great lecturer — I think some things could be included to make class more engaging, such as study Kahoots or more interaction with the class. I loved that Nara actually took our feedback (about halfway through the semester) and made a lot of changes to make the course better for us. I had a great semester!”

— ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)

“Thank you for a great class, I really enjoyed what I got to learn from this class that actually helped me with my other classes that were related to economics. You by far have been my favorite teacher and I appreciate how you saw the class struggling and actually helped us and adjusted your teaching within class activities and extra credit.”

— ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)

“GREAT lecturer, and easy to understand. I really appreciated the commitment to helping students and making changes that the class saw fit — halfway through the semester Nara asked for our opinions and thoughts on the class, and he actually made changes for us when most instructors do not. I believe Nara is very knowledgeable and passionate about economics, and his energy makes the course easier to get through.”

— ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Recitation R04)

“Prof. Chung worked very hard to improve his teaching this semester and you could tell he was passionate about his work and really wanted everyone to exceed.”

— ECON 204, Spring 2026

- *“Nara has done a great job with the course, learned a lot over the year. I also thought that the course structure balancing lecture and final project work was very beneficial and well done.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)*
- *“The learning environment is fine but could definitely use some fine tuning. I know it is difficult your first year and Nara did a great job adapting as he went on.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*
- *“Nara did a great job for his first time but improvements can definitely be made.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*

General Student Appreciation

- *“Great job Nara, I had an awesome semester with you. Have a great summer!” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)*
- *“Shows lots of promise! Teaching is tough, but if you can get econ through my thick skull you can do*

anything.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)

- *“Good teacher, good intentions.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)*
- *“I enjoyed the class, no issues with the instructor — much better than my micro class.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 2)*
- *“Overall I really liked this course and feel like I learned a lot of valuable information. One of the best classes I’ve taken so far at CSU.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*
- *“I felt like the environment was good — it was the students in the class that didn’t want to participate.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*
- *“It was great!” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*
- *“Good instructor.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*
- *“Thank you for a great semester!” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*
- *“Thanks for a great class!” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*
- *“I enjoyed Nara’s class! He’s a great instructor and is very understanding with students.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*
- *“Overall, I enjoyed this course because Nara was a good lecturer. He would always acknowledge different perspectives or nuance of topics we learned about.” — ECON 204, Spring 2025 (Section 3)*

A Letter from a Student

“I am a student in Nara Chung’s macroeconomics class. He has been a very supportive professor throughout the semester, and I appreciate the opportunity he gives us to meet with him one-on-one to ensure our understanding of the material. Professor Chung shows his dedication to teaching through these efforts even with a class as large as this one. His lectures are clear and direct with the information we should learn. He has made a positive impact on my education towards a minor in economics.”

— Letter from a student, ECON 204, Spring 2026

Appendix

The full source documents excerpted above are reproduced on the following pages.

Appendix A: Nomination Letter for the Graduate Teaching Award

Ray Miller, PhD, Assistant Professor of Economics — March 20, 2023

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
1771 Campus Delivery | Clark C306
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523-1771
970-491-6324
www.economics.colostate.edu

March 20, 2023

Dear Graduate Program Committee,

I am pleased to nominate Nara Chung for the Graduate Teaching Award. Although Nara is only a second-year student, he has excelled as a GTA. Nara was my GTA in 204 during fall semester 2022. He was exceptional in his duties as a grader and participant in lectures and GTA meetings. But where he truly shined was in leading recitations. I have observed each of my GTAs during recitation over the previous several years, and it is not hyperbole to say Nara's recitation was the most impressive I have seen (see my attached course observation form). He was very organized and engaged with the students. You can tell he worked hard in preparation but also that he is just a natural teacher. Based on course survey evaluations (attached), students also seemed to agree with this sentiment. For example, just a few comments included:

"Nara knew what he was talking about and came prepared. Nara explained things in different ways, so the answers were clear. He gave students time to figure out some of the economic questions before diving into the answers."

"Nara was a wonderful instructor and one of the most inclusive/welcoming professors/ TAs that I have had in my college career."

"Nara is amazing. The best TA I have ever had. Anyone taking his class will walk out better. He is great at what he does and such an amazing dude."

"You're the greatest TA I've ever had and will likely ever have. You care for your students and want them to succeed and grasp the concepts. You're one of the main reasons I have a solid grade in Macroeconomics. Thank You!"

Based on my observation and interaction with Nara, I agree with these student comments. Considering this, I believe Nara would be an excellent choice for the Graduate Teaching Award.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any further questions.

Sincerely,



Ray Miller, PhD
Assistant Professor of Economics
970-491-6816 (office)
ray.miller@colostate.edu



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Appendix B: Graduate Teaching Mentor Observation Form

This is the Graduate Teaching Mentor Observation Form for a Week 6 ECON 204 recitation observation (Fall 2022), filled out by Ray Miller, PhD, in his capacity as Graduate Teaching Mentor.



To be filled out by Graduate Teaching Mentor/ Instructor

1. Comments on Introduction:

Very clear introduction. Nice breaking them into groups right away to work on questions on their own for a few minutes. But also, nice job being very clear that you would be walking around to help and check-in on how things are going.

2. Comments on Engagement of the class:

Great job knowing students' names and using them!

Really nice job getting the students to interact with each other in small groups (in my experience this has been difficult for many GTAs).

Also, an excellent job walking around during the small group work and checking-in and asking questions.

3. Comments on Teaching Method:

I like the idea of giving groups different questions to work on for the first 15 minutes then relying on them to report their answer back to the class after.

When up front going over the questions, could slow down a little bit.

Little hard to read the answers on the board as quickly as you are going over them (even with the highlights, which are nice). Might consider just writing on the board? This might slow you down a bit as well. It is also a little hard to read the graphs on the screen.

The closer you got to the end of the class, the quicker you got (probably to try to get through all the material). I know there is a lot to cover but might cover less detail but go more slowly over major takeaway points (this is something I am working on myself).

4. Additional Comments:

You are a natural teacher! Really great job. One of the best recitations sessions I've observed.