Teaching Statement

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Knowledge is something that grows through sharing. Teaching is one of the time-tested vehicles for sharing knowledge through generations. Not only does it serve the obvious goal of imparting knowledge, in the process it helps the teacher clarify and organize his/her knowledge through introspection and at times offers fresh perspective into old ideas. I feel that teaching is an integral part of an academic’s life. It provides an academic the golden opportunity to contribute something valuable to the society.

Personally, I enjoy teaching immensely. I have taught high-school and undergraduate students back in India on a regular basis when I was myself an undergraduate and later masters student at the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata. During this period I also had the opportunity to help several elderly people with their open university courses. In UC Berkeley I have been a graduate student instructor (GSI) for the Stat 155, Game Theory course. In addition to these first-hand experiences, I have received a plentiful of insights and advices into pedagogy and the machinery of teaching, through various teaching conferences and the Stat 375 pedagogy seminar. All these experiences have helped me grow as a teacher over the years and I have developed my own set of teaching techniques and skills.

Let me share some of my experiences as a GSI for the Stat 155 course here. My principal goals in this course were to encourage the students think critically and to promote the development of independent problem solving abilities. I encouraged my students to come up with their own questions as they study the course materials. I also designed many interesting and sometimes open-ended problems, in addition to the usual textbook problems, to make the learning experience more interesting. Many students faced the difficulty of writing their arguments in a mathematically precise way. I prepared notes and solutions to homework problems keeping this in mind and at times made elaborate remarks emphasizing the importance of mathematical rigor. On the other hand, it was important and essential to include examples of many practical applications of Game Theory in addition to the core theoretical ideas, because the roots of the theory lies in its real-world applications. While preparing for the classes, I myself learned a great deal more about the subject. Overall, I must say that it was a rewarding experience.

It is hard to emphasize the importance of sharing knowledge. It leads to a better understanding of a discipline and to the acquisition of further knowledge and ultimately paves the way for a better future. I strongly believe that teaching is the best way to accomplish this.