

# *Sharri Byron*

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## **TEACHING PORTFOLIO**

Ph.D. Candidate\*  
Department of Economics  
University of Georgia

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\* - Also a Graduate Research Assistant at the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia.

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### Education

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|----------------|---|
| 2009(Expected) | <b>Ph.D., Economics</b><br>University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, USA  |
| 2002           | <b>M.Sc., Economics</b><br>University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago  |
| 1996           | <b>B.Sc. Economics and Mathematics</b> (Upper Second Division, double major)<br>University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago |

### Dissertation

Economy

Three Essays on Foreign Aid Effectiveness in a Small Open

- Thesis Advisor: Dr. Santanu Chatterjee.

### Fields

- Primary Fields: Macroeconomics, International Economics, Growth and Development
- Secondary Fields: Public Economics, Econometrics, Monetary Economics

### Academic Employment

#### *Graduate Research Assistant*

Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, 2003 – present. Research Assistant to Drs. Angela Fertig and John O’Looney.

Provided research assistance, data analysis, and written analysis on the following projects:

- *A Study of the Potential for Disproportionality in the Georgia Child Protection and Foster Care Systems.*
- *Understanding the Uptake of Social Programs among Those Persons Living in Extreme Poverty.*
- *Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Economic Impact/Workforce Development Issues of the Child Care Industry in Georgia.*
- *Child Support Arrears in Georgia: Who Doesn’t Pay and Why?* This project was awarded the University of Georgia Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach Scholarship of Engagement Grant, 2007-2008.

#### *Graduate Teaching Assistant*

University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, USA, 2005 - 2007.

- Introduction to Microeconomics, summer session 2007.

- International Business Environment, summer 2006 and fall 2007.
- Introduction to Macroeconomics, summer sessions 2005.

***Research Assistant***

The Caribbean Center for Monetary Studies, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, 1999 - 2001.

- Assisted the Executive Director and Research Fellows in implementing the research agenda of the Center and focused primarily on econometric modeling.

***Teaching and Research Assistant***

Teaching Assistant to Dr. Patrick Watson, Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, 1996 - 1999.

- Lectured and was responsible for courses in
  - Introduction to Mathematics
  - Introductory Statistics
  - Econometrics I & II.

**Professional Employment**

***Senior Research Analyst***

Divestment Secretariat, Ministry of Finance, Trinidad and Tobago, 2001 - 2003.

- Assisted in the development and implementation of public economic policy related to the privatization agenda.
- Prepared draft speeches for the Prime Minister, Ministers of Finance, and the Minister of Trade and Industry.
- Served as Corporate Secretary to Trinidad and Tobago (BWIA International) Airways Corporation.
- Provided technical/resource assistance and/or served as a Government appointee to Committees including:
  - The Budget Committee with respect to the preparation of the 2002/2003 National Budget.
  - The Joint Central Bank/ Ministry of Finance Committee to prepare a reform programme for strengthening the Trinidad and Tobago Capital Market.
  - The “Vision 2020” Committee for advancing Trinidad and Tobago to developed country status by 2020.
  - The Ministerial Committee appointed to oversee the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited.
  - The Port Authority Restructuring Committee with respect to the preparation of the Committee’s reports to the Cabinet, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Works and Transport.

- The Committee for the divestment of the Port Authority. Made presentations to prospective investors in Belgium, The Philippines and England as the Government representative in the divestment of Cargo-Handling Operations of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Publications**

- “CARICOM Financial Development and Economic Growth: Some Initial Statistical Relationships” in *The Financial Evolution of the Caribbean Community 1970-1996*, Caribbean Center for Monetary Studies, St. Augustine, 1997.
- *The Monetary Transmission Process in Small Open Economies: The Case of Trinidad and Tobago*, XXVII Caribbean Centre for Monetary Studies Conference Proceedings Publications, Caribbean Centre for Monetary Studies, St. Augustine, October 1996.

### **Papers Presented**

- “Foreign Aid and the Real Exchange Rate,” Department of Economics, July 2008.
- “Foreign Aid and Macroeconomic Performance,” Southern Economic Association Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, November 2007.
- “Examining the Impact of Income Taxation on Income Distribution in Barbados,” Summer Internship at The Central Bank of Barbados, Barbados, September 1998.
- “Caricom: An Economic Appraisal,” Centre de Recherche sur Les Pouvoirs Locaux dans la Cariabe, L’Universite des Antilles et de la Guyane, Scholcher, Martinique, April 1997.
- “The Monetary Transmission Process in Small Open Economies: The Case of Trinidad and Tobago,” XXVII Caribbean Centre for Monetary Studies Conference, Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, Port of Spain, October 1996.

### **Recognition and Outstanding Achievements**

- 2007, George P. Swift Award for Outstanding Teaching in Undergraduate Economics, Department of Economics, University of Georgia.
- 1996, Valedictorian. The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Professional Membership**

- Southern Economic Association, (September 2006 – present).

### **Other Skills**

- Proficient at STATA, EVIEWS, SPSS, MINITAB, TSP, and Mathematica.
- Functional in Pascal.

- Intermediate grammatical and conversational French skills.
- Functional Spanish skills.

### **Service**

- Participated in Hands on Athens, 2006.
- Assisted in charity work with the Athens Area Humane Society.
- Participated in committee meetings for People for a Prosperous Athens.
- Worked on charity projects with the Athens Area Humane Society.
- Mathematics tutor at the Fowler Elementary School Saturday Program.

### **Statement of Teaching Approach**

Someone asked me a long time ago if I thought I could make the world a better place by pursuing my Ph.D. in economics. My response was, “I can't promise to make the world a better place, but it would be a good start if I can make it just a little better.” My decision to pursue higher education not only reflects my goal to improve my own life, but also to fulfill my responsibility to my family and to society through stewardship. My approach to teaching mixes this philosophy and these personal goals along with my own experiences as a student and my understanding of what learning and excelling in academics entails. Out of this, I have discerned three sets of principles that ground my teaching of economics: relevance and active interest, academic rigor and excellence, and humor and consistency.

I am aware that many students do not share my enthusiasm for economics. In fact, it is not uncommon for young students to be apprehensive about studying economics. I have learned through my parents, who are both teachers, that learning best occurs when students show an active interest in and curiosity about the subject and when they understand its relevance to their lives and to society. Therefore first and foremost, I show my students that economics is interesting and “alive.” I spend much time preparing for class and actively working to incorporate day-to-day examples of students' behaviors and actions into my lessons. I place emphasis on how the study of economics can provide a new way to critically analyze their personal and social realities. I also share areas of my own research, highlighting the rational and common sense nature of economics. Through this interaction, I hope that my students will come to understand how the study of economics can positively affect decision-making, at both the personal and societal levels, and that they will be encouraged to grapple with concepts that they may find initially difficult.

My second set of teaching principles centers on the belief that students should leave my class with the ability to understand and communicate basic economic concepts. While I am strict in that I require a high standard of work, classroom discussion, and etiquette, I do so in an encouraging and respectful manner. I am frank with my students about my expectations, and I hold myself accountable in ways that they can observe. For instance, through my use of class time and timely feedback, my students soon learn that we are all working to achieve excellence. Though some students inevitably may not like this approach, on the other hand, some students have thanked me privately for pushing

them beyond what they thought were their capabilities. As a result of my belief in active learning, I structure my classes to encourage discussion, and I prepare assignments that make students internalize the subject matter while gaining confidence in their analytical abilities. For instance, I feature news analyses to foster critical thinking and use cutting-edge technology (e.g., the Aplia interface) to provide self-paced homework assignments for which students receive detailed explanations of all incorrect answers. I make the intermediate level students write critical analyses of current events. As I encourage them to use the language of economics in these assignments, I focus on three life skills -- writing, speaking, and technology -- which I believe all university education should stress, regardless of subject matter. I constantly reinforce that I am available to monitor their progress and that the classroom and my office are safe environments for discussion and learning.

My third principle centers on a student's need for consistency in all aspects of the classroom environment. I currently use both Power Point and the ever-reliable blackboard to deliver my lectures. I adapt Power Point slides that accompany teaching texts to the classroom time and also include relevant examples that we have used throughout the semester. I like to combine these media and other teaching resources to accommodate the different learning styles of my students. I make my assessment criteria very clear at the beginning of the semester, and I take care to ensure that students adhere to the code of Academic Honesty. While I find these structures crucial for a quality course, I also believe that both teaching and learning can and should be enjoyable. The use of occasional humor and levity helps to encourage a lively classroom environment and has often led to impromptu discussions in which students contribute enthusiastically to the many sides of an economic argument. I derive much pleasure when, with a little prodding, students are able to discern and appreciate the relevant concepts. I am comfortable adapting my lesson plan to student interests; in my experience, this often leads to a valuable discussion that elucidates economic principles in terms that students can relate. I believe that this type of guided discussion helps to reinforce the concepts of the traditional lectures in an exciting and non-threatening environment. Moreover, I am then able to use their discussions and examples to draw out key points and segue into new topics. I also encourage group study and visit with the groups on occasion. I make it clear that my visits are not for instruction, but rather to function as a facilitation of their discussions as they collectively try to understand the material.

My parents were important role models as teachers, for I saw how their tireless encouragement inspired their students to believe in themselves. As a student, I have also had many teachers who believed in me even when I did not believe in myself. I too believe in students' ability to understand economics, and I constantly challenge myself to find better ways of conveying my lectures. With this broad approach, both I, as a teacher, and my students are able to grow and learn.

## **Future Teaching Goals**

I am interested in teaching various levels of economics courses, including:

- introductory microeconomics and macroeconomics

- intermediate macroeconomics
- introductory econometrics
- growth and development
- international economics
- money and banking

My teaching experience at the University of Georgia has been concentrated on medium and small courses. However, at the University of the West Indies, I was wholly responsible for large, introductory courses as well as for an upper-level undergraduate econometrics series. With this experience, therefore, I would feel comfortable being responsible for any size class. Additionally, I look forward to working with students on a one-on-one basis, serving as an academic mentor and advisor.

Presently I use a combination of Power Point and the traditional blackboard to aid my lectures. While I am comfortable with these teaching media, I would like to incorporate more guided discussion in my classes. For example, I would like to exploit the use of other technologies and Internet facilities, such as web pages and postings, to achieve this goal. I think that facilitated discussion can be an alternative teaching tool to motivate learning and help students acquire a critical appreciation for the topics in economics. I am not familiar with all of these techniques and would welcome the opportunity to learn and practice some of these newer teaching methods in the classroom.

### **Special Training and Teaching Related Experiences**

#### *GRSC 7770: Seminar for Teaching Assistants*

As a graduate student in the Economics Department at UGA, I took GRSC 7770 before entering the classroom. This is a seminar-style class that serves as an introduction to the teaching of economics. I was introduced to technologies that support teaching and learning and was also observed as I taught in a model classroom environment. I was advised of the different learning styles, classroom management techniques, and course administrative matters.

#### *Teaching Awards*

In 2007, I was awarded the Swift Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching in Economics from the Department of Economics at UGA.

### **Teaching Responsibilities and Description of Courses Taught**

#### *Teaching Experience at the University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago*

Prior to coming to the University of Georgia, I taught upper level econometrics as well as sections of introductory statistics and principles of economics in the Economics Department of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago between 1996 and 1999. I was responsible for all teaching materials, exams, grading, and general administrative matters concerning these classes. The statistics and

principles classes were both introductory, with no prerequisites, so there was a large variance in the degree of knowledge of economics, statistics, and mathematics among the students. The enrollment for these principles classes was in excess of 100 students. Additionally, I taught the econometrics series for two years, with approximately 40 upper-level students. These students were required to have completed intermediate economics statistics and mathematical methods in economics. Specifically, I was responsible for the preparation and administration of these classes:

- Introduction to Mathematics - (ECON1003)
- Introduction to Statistics - (ECON1005)
- Econometrics I - (ECON3049)
- Econometrics II - (ECON3050)

### ***Teaching Experience at the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia***

Since completing the graduate teaching assistant training in summer 2005 at the University of Georgia, I have taught four undergraduate sections in economics in the Department of Economics -- two at the principles level and two at the intermediate level. I was responsible for all matters concerning these classes from creating course materials to administration of the class. Below is a description of the courses that I taught at UGA.

#### **Principles of Macroeconomics -- (ECON 2106)**

Role: Teaching Assistant

Semester taught: Summer 2005

Enrollment and Student Profile: 44 students, undergraduate

Type of Course: Introductory

#### **Principles of Microeconomics -- (ECON 2105)**

Role: Teaching Assistant

Semester taught: Summer 2007

Enrollment and Student Profile: 47 students, undergraduate

Type of Course: Introductory

#### ***Teaching Responsibilities:***

Both of these courses were mid-sized principles classes. I used *Principles of Microeconomics*, 4th edition by Gregory Mankiw as the required text for the microeconomics section and *Principles of Macroeconomics*, 4th edition by Ben Bernanke for the macroeconomics class. In both cases, I lectured closely to the chapters of the texts and modified the Power Point slides that accompany the textbooks to reflect my classroom examples. In all cases I edited and adapted the slides and content to meet my classroom time constraints. I supplemented these with blackboard drawings of graphs and diagrams relevant to the material I was covering in the lecture. I also drew heavily upon current events. In these principles classes, my goal was to force the students to think critically about their behavior as economic beings. I also drew upon many examples of student behavior and classroom discussion to elicit key points related to economics concepts. For instance, I introduced opportunity cost and utility maximization in terms of a decision to consume some combination of soda or pizza for a given budget constraint. In the macroeconomics sequence I asked students, for

example, how an announcement by the Fed to cut interest rates might affect their lives. Naturally they did not think that Fed decisions affected them directly, but when we explored how changes in interest rates can affect the general price level, they appeared to better appreciate the consequences of monetary policy. I was responsible for developing the course outline, the syllabus, all lesson plans, and all exams as well as a grading scale. In addition to holding office hours, I regularly attended (on invitation) their group sessions, where I would focus on how to think about problems in economic terms.

### **International Business Environment -- (ECON 4040)**

Role: Teaching Assistant

Semesters taught: Summer 2006, Fall 2007

Enrollment and Student Profile: 13 (summer) and 5 (fall) students, undergraduate

Type of Course: Upper level, intermediate

Course Content: Open economy macroeconomics, intermediate macroeconomics

#### *Teaching Responsibilities:*

For this course, I used *International Economics*, 4th edition by James Gerber as the text. Given that I had small sections for this class, I was able to focus on developing language and analytical skills through extensive class discussion. I encouraged the students to read *The Economist* and *The New York Times*, and many times I introduced a lecture by requiring them to read an assigned article or find an article on a particular topic. Since this was an intermediate-level class, I expected them to develop the language of economics. As a graded assignment, students critically analyzed an approved article on a course topic. After their initial submission, I gave comments and provided them an opportunity to make corrections before I assigned a grade. Students appreciated this feedback and have since told me that they enjoyed these written exercises as much as the classroom sessions.

In my lectures, I utilized a combination of edited Power Point chapters and, where appropriate, I would carefully go through examples on the blackboard. I was responsible for developing the course outline, syllabi, all lesson plans, and exams as well as a grading scale.

### **Evaluation of Teaching at UGA**

I have been the sole instructor for ECON 2105 (Principles of Macroeconomics), ECON 2106 (Principles of Microeconomics), and two sections of ECON 4040 (International Business Environment). The students were asked to give confidential evaluations of my performance as an instructor near the end of the semester. Table 1 below gives the responses for each semester. I did not include the evaluation for the Fall 2007 session of ECON 4040 as there were only five enrolled students. Each question was answered on a five-point scale, with five being the highest score possible for each statement.

I asked the Teaching Coordinator, Dr. Myra Moore, to compile average departmental responses for both 2105 and 2106. The departmental averages are shown in the first column of Table 1. As Table 1 shows, several of my responses are above the

average departmental responses. On the question (#1) focused on course organization, my average score over the semesters taught was close to the department average of 4.20. As to whether the instructor was well prepared (Question #2), my averages for the three terms I taught at UGA ranged from 3.77 to 4.67. The average response for the department was 4.34. And finally on the general *rate my teacher* question (#10), my average response exceeded the department's of 3.46.

The department average responses are across a large number of sections and include some other 2000 level courses between Fall 2000 and Fall 2005. I wish to highlight four areas in which the average responses for my classes taught show my students' perception of my teaching capabilities. First, I stimulate interest in the study of economics. Second, I am accessible and available to my students and aspire to create a learning environment. Third, from the students' perspective, I am well prepared and make sure that my course materials complement classes. And fourth, my performance has improved over time and in the various categories as I discover techniques that work and refine (and discard) those that do not. As further proof of my improvement over time, in 2007 I received the Swift Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching in Economics from the Department of Economics at UGA.

**Table 1 - Teaching Evaluation Scores**

Term: Course:	Dep't Averages	Su'07*	Su'06	Su'05
		2106	4040	2105
1. Course was well organized	4.20	4.13	4.50	3.59
2. Instructor was well prepared	4.34	4.40	4.67	3.77
3. Instructor used class time wisely	4.23	4.07	4.17	3.59
4. Instructor answered questions clearly and thoroughly	4.01	3.80	4.83	3.64
5. Instructor was available for consultation	4.19	4.40	4.50	4.14
6. Instructor stimulated interest in the subject	3.82	4.13	4.67	3.45
7. Exams covered material well	4.02	3.67	4.33	3.36
8. Exams were graded fairly	4.34	3.53	4.33	3.41
9. Readings complemented the lectures	4.07	4.13	4.40	3.86
10. Rate the instructor	3.46	3.54	4.17	3.00
Enrollment:		44	13	47
Responses:		15	6	22

\*Awarded 2007 *Swift Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching in Economics* from the Department of Economics.

### **Student Comments**

- I enjoyed this class as an overview of international economic concepts. It did not get too detailed but provided sufficient explanation. ... The slides were readily available online which was very helpful.
- She did a good job teaching and liked what she was doing, but her expectations were too high!

- I have really enjoyed this class and the subject covered. The teaching was always interesting and the material was too.
- I thought this course was the best course I have taken at UGA thus far. I loved the teacher. She was very well prepared and taught very well. I would recommend she teach more classes because I would love to take her again.
- Good class. Repeats things a lot during lecture, but I guess that is good for the slow learners. Maybe a little harsh in grading, looked for incredibly specific answers in the test essays.
- I really enjoy Ms. Byron's enthusiasm she brings to class. ... it has been an enjoyable course that I will be able to use for the rest of my life in my business career.
- Overall, Ms. Byron presents a dynamic sense and interest to the study of Economics - while the class was very fast paced, there was a yearning to know more. Ms. Byron gravitated to this well. To that end, she has certainly left a long lasting impression for continuing my studies in Economics and a new way of looking at a less than perfect world.

## References

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