

**Shanti Gamper-Rabindran**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and Department of Economics**  
**University of Pittsburgh**

**Teaching Statement and Student Evaluations**

**Teaching economics to policy analysts**

My courses aim to sharpen students' skills in crafting economic arguments, based on empirical evidence, in policy debates. These courses draw on my training in economics, applied econometrics, law and environmental sciences. I illustrate the relevance of economic concepts by applying them to current debates on environmental, health and development issues. I teach research methods, program evaluation, cost-effectiveness analysis, and benefit-risk trade-offs within the context of specific policies. Students bring their perspectives from across the globe to anchor our discussions in the real-world. Students' quantitative and written evaluations are excerpted below.

**Teaching Evaluation – graduate-level economics-based policy courses 2012-2013**

Global Economy	4.25 out of 5
Global Environmental Policy	4.21 out of 5
Global Health Policy	4.31 out of 5
Development Economics	4.13 out of 5

**Course assessment**

*“Dr. Gamper Rabindran is very knowledgeable about the economic aspects of health and development, and she presented complex information in ways that were comprehensible to students who lacked her economic and statistical training.”*

*“Dr. Gamper-Rabindran helped me and other students by giving constructive feedback on our strengths and weaknesses and enhanced our learning by focusing on current economic issues in addition to classical textbook material.”*

*“I found this course to be one of the most challenging and rewarding courses in the program. The course combines lectures with in-depth student discussions that called for critical analysis and sharing of experiences in the field... The professor guided students in writing clear and concise policy memos based on economic arguments and feasible policy recommendations. I believe such skills will be extremely applicable for careers in my field and have not been emphasized in other GSPIA courses I have taken.”*

**Economics in policy analysis**

*“Identifying the “economic argument” has been a unifying theme throughout this class and I feel that developing the skill of seeing global problems through an economic lens is an invaluable tool for anyone pursuing a degree in a policy-related field.”*

*“I have absolutely no formal education in economics. One of the things that has most resounded with me in class has been the ... importance of properly framing an argument. By using economic terminology to describe a policy suggestion, an argument is strengthened, even if compared to the same idea that is simply stated in non-economic terminology.”*

*“A few years later, I still put into practice the skills I learned from Dr. Gamper-Rabindran. The concise and clear style with which she taught us to present an argument, in the context of memo writing, has served me greatly.”*

### **Students’ professional preparation**

*“PIA 2510 has been one of the most practically useful classes I have taken at GSPIA. In addition to the helpful feedback on writing and presenting, this class has also changed the way that I think about and use research.... This class has given me the motivation and opportunity to become more familiar with these primary research sources, how they can be accessed, analyzed, and ultimately utilized in the formation of policy analysis and recommendation. Using such primary resources will be increasingly important for me as I specialize and enter the professional world.”*

*“It was by far the most interesting and stimulating course which I have taken at GSPIA since commencing my studies. This class enabled me to pursue my professional development in the way that I believe is most crucial, by engaging people to work together positively, exchanging ideas and establishing priorities in order that we may better address the issues presented and hopefully effectuate solutions.”*

*“I have learned writing professional memos in an effective way through Dr. Rabindran’s consistent guidance. Dr. Rabindran is highly energetic and organized while she was teaching the course. She was resourceful, student oriented and committed to her professional development. She communicated effectively with her students. She provided detailed and encouraging feedback on students’ work. I would highly recommend her to any graduate school that teaches economic development.”*

### **Students’ research skills**

*“Learning research methods is vital for a doctoral student. When I had been involved in the research project in taking Dr. Gamper's class, Dr. Gamper gave me much worthy guidance in how to organize a database, how to make hypothesis in logical sequence and how to find enough proof to confirm the hypothesis. Her guidance was meaningful not only for the particular research project I had taken, but also helpful for my own future research.”*

*“During my time studying under her, Dr. Gamper-Rabindran helped me to hone my analytical and empirical skills which later proved an invaluable asset for PhD work.”*

*“Dr. Gamper-Rabindran's focus on empirical research skills was something that was often lacking in other masters courses at GSPIA. Later research work and PhD courses have proven to necessitate these empirical skills over the more theoretical work that other courses entailed.”*

### **Setting high expectations on students’ work**

*“Shanti could be a sharp critic of poor writing, which was critical to ensuring that we all completed the course with products that we would be proud to show future employers or colleagues.”*

*“I think everyone was a bit intimidated when starting the class because Dr. Gamper-Rabindran’s criteria for grading our memos seemed a bit demanding. However, she eased us into it by allowing us to write an un-graded group memo first -- and looking back I think this was a successful approach.”*

*“Dr. Gamper-Rabindran’s class was one of the few that challenged me to both think critically and improve my performance. It was one of very few classes that I felt I had to work for a solid grade. The hard work was refreshing and encouraging, helping me to improve as a student and scholar.”*

### **Instructor’s teaching style**

*“Always full of energy and enthusiasm, she made the classroom experience fun, encouraging us all to think critically about the cases or theories we were discussing. She brought substantial knowledge to the classroom and incorporated current events with great detail.”*

*“Well-prepared, feedback, enthusiastic, positive.”*

*“Effort – she puts a lot of work into the course and makes herself available.”*

*“Organization! Things were very clearly laid out, making it extremely helpful to pace the workload.”*

*“The respect that the students gave her was a testimony to her well organized teaching style and prompt feedback to students’ questions, projects and examinations.”*

*“She created an environment that encouraged student participation and class discussion rather than just lecturing for three hours. Her focus is on how we can use this class to work on real world skills.”*

### **Summary**

*“I look forward to collaborating with her in future research and am thankful that I had the opportunity to learn from her while at GSPIA. I regard Dr. Gamper-Rabindran as one of the best and most influential professors that I have had and would recommend her to anyone.”*

*“Dr. Gamper is one of the most dedicated professors I have ever seen in this university...I am inspired and encouraged by this energetic, wise young professor.”*