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# The Effect of Classroom Games on Student Learning and Instructor Evaluations

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## Abstract.

*Assuming that instructors of economics are utility maximizers, they may find it useful to engage in classroom behavior that is likely to generate favorable outcomes with respect to student course evaluations. This is especially true if student course evaluations are used in assessing teaching effectiveness for tenure, promotion, and salary decisions. In this paper, we present evidence that the use of a classroom gaming exercise can raise instructor evaluations and enhance student learning outcomes. The tests are conducted in a framework that indirectly controls for grade inflation and considers student attendance and grade expectations as other sources of influence on instructor evaluation ratings.*

## Key Words:

classroom simulations  
teaching effectiveness  
student course evaluations  
student evaluations of teaching

JEL Codes: A20, A22

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# The Effect of Classroom Games on Student Learning and Instructor Evaluations

## **I. Introduction**

Recent work regarding instructor evaluation ratings has re-opened the debate on whether the statistical correlation of grades and instructor evaluations can be explained by instructor manipulation of evaluations through the adoption of lenient grading policies [Greenwald and Gillmore, 1997; Wilson, 1998]. Although earlier research found that instructors could ‘buy’ higher evaluations with easier grading policies, more recent evidence suggests that this influence may be trivial [Greenwald, 1997]. However, Greenwald and Gillmore (1997) argue that the higher course grades and ratings relationship is most consistent with the theory of lenient grading policies. This prompts Wilson (1998, A12) to comment that “professors who want high ratings have learned that they must dumb down material, inflate grades, and keep students entertained.”

In this study, we provide evidence that instructor evaluation ratings are improved when a supplemental gaming exercise is introduced into an upper level economics course that neither dumbs down the material nor inflates grades but rather does keep students more entertained.

## **II. Brief Literature Review**

Given the widespread use of instructor evaluations as a tool for assessing teaching effectiveness for tenure, promotion, and salary decisions [White, 1995; Becker and Watts, 1999], a utility maximizing instructor will engage in behavior that raises evaluation scores. Indeed, a large literature on the subject has developed that explores instructor response to the use of evaluations [for example, see Becker (1975), McKenzie (1975), and Kibbs (1975)]. The controversial aspect of this literature is that some empirical evidence suggests that instructors attempt to “buy” higher evaluation scores by adopting easier grading policies [Mirus, 1973;

Nelson and Lynch, 1984; Zangenehzadeh, 1988]. A potential problem of the tests is noted by Seiver (1983) and Stratton, Myers and King (1994), who point out that these tests cannot differentiate between rising evaluation scores induced by better teaching (and thus, higher grades) on the one hand and or reduced grading standards on the other hand.

Although the use of classroom games in teaching economics was pioneered over fifty years ago by Chamberlin (1948), their use in the modern classroom has only recently grown in frequency [See Holt (1999) and Holt's website index of 91 related manuscripts].<sup>1</sup> Fels (1993) observes that this may be a result of high start-up costs and the lack of evidence suggesting that student comprehension of course material is enhanced by using games to illustrate theory. Holt's web-site collection of classroom experiments and games addresses the former issue, our work addresses the latter issue and also considers the effect of using classroom games on student ratings of instructors.

Given the reported relationship between students' expected grades and evaluation scores, techniques that increase teaching efficiency, as reflected in student comprehension of material, should also result in higher evaluation scores for the instructor [Stratton, et. al., 1984]. The empirical evidence on this is limited. Shmanske (1988) finds a weak positive relationship between instructor evaluation scores and student performance, whereas Aigner and Thum (1986) report that facets of teaching style significantly influence evaluation scores but are unable to directly measure teaching effectiveness.

A brief overview of the classroom method is provided in Section III. In Section IV, the data set is described. Two elementary statistical tests regarding the effect of the portfolio project on student performance and instructor ratings are reviewed in this section as well. In Section V, regression results are reported for whether the use of the game as a teaching technique is

associated with higher instructor evaluation ratings. A sampling of open-ended student comments drawn from the evaluation forms is presented in Section VI. The comments qualitatively highlight the difference in student response to the version of the course with or without the portfolio project. Section VII is the conclusion.

### **III. Classroom Method**

Bringing course material to life (entertainment value?) for the student can be accomplished easily in a financial economics course by incorporating an investment portfolio project into course material. The setup is a straightforward version of the Stock Market Game discussed by Wood, O'Hare, and Andrews (1992) and Bell (1993). In the present study, the technique is applied in an upper level economics course, Money and Banking.

Students are required to manage a portfolio of assets and submit monthly updates of portfolio performance, along with an explanation for their investment decisions. The explanation is the most important component of the update, for this is where students are required to apply course material to decision making in financial markets. Grades are not affected by portfolio performance, but by the quality of the rationale behind the investment decisions. As an added incentive, students compete against each other for recognition as the outstanding investment analyst in the class.

### **IV. Data and Tests of Difference in Means**

The data set is drawn from eight Money and Banking courses instructed by one of the authors at two universities populated by similar students. Both universities are state supported commuter campuses set in a suburban location providing residence halls for only a small fraction of total enrollment. Of the eight sections, one section is from each of 1993 and 2001, while two

each are from 1995, 1996, and 1998. Total enrollment in the eight sections was 246, from which 172 student evaluation forms were available. The portfolio project sample (189 students, 121 forms available) consists of both 1995 and 1996 sections as well as one section each from 1998 and 2001. The non-portfolio project sample (57 students, 52 forms available) consists of one section each from 1993 and 1998.

In the remaining portion of this section, we present the results of two elementary tests designed to evaluate whether the supplemental game resulted in enhanced student learning and increased ratings of the course and instructor. The first test focuses on student comprehension as measured by the percentage of total points possible that each student earned. The only difference in the way students earned grade credit across the samples is that students in the portfolio sections also earned points associated with the project while students in the non-portfolio sections only earned points by taking periodic examinations.<sup>2</sup>

The grades from each student population (all portfolio and non-portfolio sections) are assumed to have a normal distribution with the same but unknown variance. The statistical test of difference in means across the two samples is conducted using Student's t-statistic. The data and test result are found in Panel A of Table 1.

The average score in the two samples significantly different. In sections with the portfolio project, the average score was 66.8 percent, while in the sections without the supplemental exercise the average was 53.3 percent.<sup>3</sup> The t-statistic is 6.77, indicating that the difference is significant with 99 percent confidence. This result suggests that student learning outcomes were significantly enhanced by including a supplemental exercise in the course and is consistent with the findings of Fels (1984) and Mehdizadeh (1990).

Next, we consider the effect on student evaluation ratings of instructor performance when

the investment project is included in the course. Prior to commenting on these tests, however, a caveat should be noted. Given the data set, a potential problem is that the evaluation scores could be expected to rise through time as instructor experience increases. Although we are unable to directly control for this phenomenon in these tests (but do in the regression model), the combination of 1998 data with 1993 data in the non-portfolio sample partially mitigates this problem. In addition, the evaluation question topics may shed some light on this issue. It seems reasonable that greater experience would most likely be reflected in the categories for “instructor preparation” and “course organization” and, to a lesser extent, in the “well taught” ratings.

We hypothesize that the evaluation components most clearly reflecting active student learning would be those regarding student “Motivation” and whether the course was “Challenging.” Increased ratings on whether the instructor motivated students could arise from the relevance of the material with respect to financial markets. The aspect of whether the course was challenging would arise as students recognize the difficulty in application of theory to financial market activity. It also seems reasonable to expect an increase in “Well Taught” ratings as student interest and appreciation of the material is heightened through completion of the portfolio project. Whether an instructor is “Unbiased” would least likely be effected by increased instructor experience or the addition of the portfolio project.

In Table 1, average instructor evaluation ratings for six different topic areas are presented. The scores range from one to five, with a rating of five reflecting the highest level of student satisfaction with the instructor.<sup>4</sup> The results from the difference in means test for the ratings across the portfolio and non-portfolio samples are found in Panel B of Table 1.

The statistical results are consistent with expectations. The portfolio project was designed to stimulate interest in the course material. Thus, we expected to observe increases in

the “motivation” and “challenging” ratings since students had the opportunity to apply what they learned in the classroom to decision-making in actual financial markets. The t-statistics for these categories indicate a significant increase in the average rating at the 95 percent confidence level or better. It was also hypothesized that an increase in the “well taught” rating could result from the addition of the active student learning exercise (the investment project). The t-statistic for this question topic indicates (with 97.5 percent confidence) an increase in average rating score in sections that included the portfolio project.

The question topics that would most likely reflect increased experience are “preparation” and “organization,” although “organization” could also be influenced by student appreciation of the way the portfolio project is integrated into the course. These instructor ratings show a statistically significant increase at the 95 percent and 99 percent confidence level, respectively, when the portfolio project is part of the course. Zangenehzadeh (1988) finds that that instructor preparation and organization significantly influence student assessment of course quality. Thus, the rating changes in these two categories could be influenced by the dual influence of increasing experience and the introduction of the portfolio project.

Also confirming prior expectations are the evaluation ratings for “unbiased” which show no significant increase. It seems unlikely that a hands-on investment project would increase students’ perception of whether or not the students felt they or their work was impartially graded.

## **V. Regression Results**

In this section we present regression results from a sub-sample of the data set for which additional student demographic information and grade expectations information are available. The data are available from 151 evaluation forms from six sections of the course (one from 1993, two each from 1995 and 1996, and one from 2001). A data summary is presented in Table 2.



In the model, the instructor rating is regressed on a set of binary variables characterizing the effects of grade expectations, number of absences, and whether the portfolio project was included in the course. In particular, the specification is as follows:

$$\text{RATING} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{BE}) + \beta_2(\text{CEDE}) + \beta_3(\text{AB4+}) + \beta_4(\text{PORT}) + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

RATING is the student rating of the instructor for whether the course was taught well, presented in an organized manner, motivating, challenging; and whether the instructor appeared to be prepared for class, and was unbiased toward students.<sup>5</sup>

The student demographic variables considered first are student expectations about their grade in the course and self-reported student absences. Course evaluations were distributed during the last two weeks of the course before the final exam and before the portfolio project term paper was submitted. Student grade expectations are modeled as dummy variables where, for example, if a student expected an ‘B’ grade, BE = 1; BE = 0 otherwise. Since only two students in the sample were expecting a ‘D’ grade, these students are modeled jointly with students expecting a ‘C’ grade by the variable CEDE. AB4+ is a dummy variable that equals one when a student self-reported four or more class absences, and equals zero otherwise.

The constant in the regression,  $\beta_0$ , jointly characterizes students who reported three or less absences with students who expected to receive an ‘A’ grade in the course. This specification for the constant is chosen in light of the collinearity between high grade expectations and few absences, and Durden and Ellis’ (1995) result that relatively low levels of class absence do not significantly affect student learning.

PORT is a dummy variable equaling one if the student was in a section of the course that included the portfolio project, and zero if not. Also considered in an auxiliary regression is an

interactive effect between PORT and students grouped by grade expectations. One group of students considered is those who expected 'A' and 'B' grades. This group is designated by the variable AEBE, which equals  $AE + BE$ . The second group is students who expected 'C' and 'D' grades (CEDE) and is calculated as  $CE + DE$ . The interactive variables are defined as PABE, which equals  $(PORT \times AEBE)$ , and PCDE, which equals  $(PORT \times CEDE)$ . These interactive variables allow for the identification of different effects of the portfolio on ratings by grade expectations depending on whether the student believed he or she was in the top or bottom half of the grade distribution.<sup>6</sup>

Since the constant of the regression characterizes students who regularly attended classroom lectures and expected an 'A' grade, the partial derivatives of RATING with respect to BE and CEDE are expected to be negative. Students expecting lower grades have been shown to penalize their instructors with lower ratings [Stumpf and Freedman, 1979]. In addition, attribution theory [Greenwald, 1980; Gigliotti and Buchtel, 1990; and Theall, Franklin, and Ludlow, 1990] suggests that while students reward themselves with the credit for performing well in a course, they blame the instructor when their performance is sub-par.

If it is reasonably assumed that students who do not attend class regularly tend to perform poorly [Park and Kerr, 1990; Romer, 1993; and Durden and Ellis, 1995], then the partial of RATING with respect to AB4+ is expected to be negative. The lack of attendance results in sub-par performance, is attributed to the instructor, and reflected in lower ratings.

The use of supplemental exercises has been found to increase instructor evaluations ratings [Fels, 1984; Mehdizadeh, 1990], and perhaps explains the growing interest in, and compilation of, resources about classroom games (Holt, 1999 and Holt's website cited in endnote 1). Thus, the portfolio dummy (PORT) and its interactive forms are expected to be positively

related to RATING, although the effect may vary by grade expectation.

The ordinary least squares results for Equation 1 are reported in Table 3. The results for each rating are reported in the columns of the table. The entries are the estimated coefficients with the t-statistics reported in parentheses below the coefficient. White's (1980) test for heteroscedasticity in the residuals indicates that the null of homoscedastic errors can not be rejected. White's test statistic is reported for each model and is everywhere less than the critical  $\Pi^2$  value with 90 percent confidence and five degrees of freedom (13.36).

The presence of the portfolio project in the course is associated with significantly higher evaluation ratings across nearly all evaluation categories. With respect to the 'taught well' and 'motivates' ratings, PORT generates an increase in the 'taught well' rating by two-thirds of a point (17 percent increase) while the 'motivates' rating increased by one-half of a point (13% increase). In addition, the 'challenges' rating increased by 11 percent when the portfolio project was included in the course. There was no significant effect on whether students perceived that their work was evaluated in an unbiased manner. These results, based on data from six sections of the course, are generally consistent with the t-test results reported for the full sample (eight sections) in the previous section.

Students' expectations for a high grade also significantly influenced whether students rated the instructor highly. Recall that the constant in the regression characterizes the rating assigned by students who expected an 'A' in the course and who missed three or less classes. These "better" students, who serve as the baseline of comparison in the model, rated the instructor at approximately 3.9 to 4.5 across the categories. Although the variables characterizing lower grade expectations (BE and CEDE) are not significant across all specifications at conventional levels, they do have the expected sign. Moreover, CEDE is

significant at the 99 percent confidence level in the regression for the most general assessment of the course, whether it was taught well. Students expecting 'C' or 'D' grades offered an overall assessment that was 17 percent lower (six-tenths of a point) than their classroom peers expecting better grades.

In addition, the results of this analysis suggest that relatively high levels of student absence were associated with a significant reduction in instructor rating. As reported in Table 3, the coefficient for AB4+ indicates that the average rating for 'taught well,' 'organized,' 'motivated,' and 'prepared' was significantly reduced by between 12 and 19 percent. To the extent that greater absence is associated with lower levels of student performance, the result is consistent with attribution theory discussed above. These students may have attributed their attendance-related poor performance to a 'poor' instructor and reduced their rating accordingly.

The results of a supplemental regression exercise are reported in Table 4. In these models, the effect of the portfolio project is allowed to vary by the students' grade expectations rather than being constrained to have an equal effect across all students regardless of their grade expectations. The results are generally consistent with the constrained model, although the portfolio project loses its effectiveness in raising instructor ratings among students who expected to receive a grade in the lower half of the grade distribution.

The portfolio's effect on instructor rating is amplified among students expecting better grades. On average, the overall assessment of the course (taught well) rises by 24 percent among students expecting an 'A' grade in sections with the portfolio project as compared to 17 percent among all students expecting a top grade. An f-test restricting the estimated coefficients of PABE and PCDE in this specification for 'well taught' rejects the null of equal effects at the 89 percent confidence level. Although this does not meet conventional criteria for significance, it is

suggestive that the effect of the portfolio may vary by whether students expect a grade in the upper or lower half of the grade distribution.

## **VI. Qualitative Evidence: Testimonials**

In addition to coding a rating for the categories on the instructor evaluation form, students from all sections had the opportunity to provide open-ended written comments about the course. Additional evidence supporting the statistical results is a qualitative assessment of “Without Portfolio” and “With Portfolio” quotes obtained from the students’ instructor evaluation sheets.

### Typical Quotes: Without Portfolio

“Course was strictly lecture. Not sure what other materials are available, but may want to consider using them.”

“I found [that] this course is very important for economic knowledge, but felt lost in the process.”

These and other quotes indicate that students were less interested in the material and may have been overwhelmed by the course. The difference in tone and content is clear when these comments are contrasted with those made by students in the sections which completed the investment project.

### Typical Quotes: With Portfolio

“The mock portfolio was a great idea. It was a good way to get students interested in the class and demonstrated the theories we learned.”

“I enjoyed doing the portfolio project because I was able to apply what we were learning in this class to actual life.”

“I think that the stock market game is a great idea to make the class more interesting. There is no way of getting around the fact that some of the information learned in this class is boring [?!] but the game makes it all worth it.”

“I have enjoyed the fact that we get to practice what we learn in class through our continuous portfolio management project. I have definitely enjoyed learning to read the Wall Street Journal. It’s important that you have encouraged us to relate class material to the real world.”

“This is the most useful block of college instructing I have ever received. If I had access to this information thirty years ago as a college undergraduate, I would not now be starting a second career after retirement from the military.”

## **VII. Conclusion**

The results obtained in this study shed light on the issue of whether the use of classroom games has an impact on student learning. This provides some important evidence with respect to Fels’ (1993, 365) concern that the cost of classroom game implementation could exceed the “meager evidence of [their] educational value.” A test is conducted in which, *ceteris paribus*, student scores were observed to increase in the sample that included a financial market portfolio project. Holding lecture style and grading policy fixed across the two samples and examining instructor ratings sheds light on the issue of whether student learning, enhanced by the portfolio project, influences evaluation scores.

The results in the present analysis suggest that students comprehended more of the material, and assigned higher scores to their evaluation of the instructor. Furthermore, the analysis controlled for student grade expectations, thus permitting the identification of the effect of a supplemental gaming exercise on instructor ratings. This method avoids the issue raised by Seiver (1983), Aigner and Thum (1986) and Zangenehzadeh (1988) who demonstrate that students with higher grade expectations rate instructors more favorably. Finally, these results were obtained using a test method that indirectly controlled for the effect of grade inflation and grading policy. Thus, the higher evaluation scores do not simply reflect a “selling out” to students in an effort to raise evaluation ratings.

It is worthwhile to note that very little other course material was altered or “crowded out” as a result of including the investment project. While the course material was little changed, student reaction was more favorable and student performance was enhanced in sections including

the portfolio project. In addition, instructor evaluation ratings significantly increased in the presence of the supplemental exercise. Thus, we provide evidence that classroom gaming exercises may increase student performance and raise instructor evaluation ratings. These findings are tentatively attributed to the fact that it became readily apparent to the students how useful the classroom material could be in the “real world.”

Table 1

Panel A			
Test of Change in Average Student Scores Effect of Portfolio Project			
	Sections without Project	Sections with Project	Test T-Statistic
Average Student Score	53.3%	69.3%	7.37***
Standard Deviation	14.0%	14.4%	
Number of Students	57	189	
*** Rejects null hypothesis at 99% confidence level.			

Panel B			
Test of Change in Average Evaluation Rating Effect of Portfolio Project			
	Average Evaluation Rating		Test T-Statistic
Evaluation Question Topic	Sections without Project	Sections with Project	
Class is Well Taught	3.82	4.14	1.96**
Organization of Material	3.92	4.31	2.67***
Motivated Students	3.75	4.06	2.07**
Instructor Preparation	4.46	4.65	1.93*
Challenged Students	3.94	4.19	1.92*
Unbiased Treatment of Students	4.51	4.58	0.65
Number of Students	52	121	
Instructor ratings range from one to five. Five is the highest score.			
*** Rejects null hypothesis at 99% confidence level.			
** Rejects null hypothesis at 97.5% confidence level.			
* Rejects null hypothesis at 95% confidence level.			



Table 2  
Summary Statistics for Regression Sample

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Instructor Rating:			
Taught Well	4.05	1.03	150
Organized Presentation	4.23	0.85	151
Motivated	3.89	0.96	150
Prepared	4.50	0.76	151
Challenged	4.01	0.88	150
Unbiased	4.48	0.77	146
PORT	0.80	0.40	151
PORT x AEBE	0.58	0.50	150
PORT x CEDE	0.23	0.42	150
AE	0.28	0.45	150
BE	0.43	0.50	150
CEDE	0.29	0.45	150
AB4+	0.13	0.34	149
N = Number of Observations			

Table 3

## Influences on Instructor Ratings I

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable					
	Taught Well	Organized Presentation	Motivated	Prepared	Challenged	Unbiased
Constant	3.90** (17.29)	4.25** (23.05)	3.90** (18.50)	4.43** (27.33)	3.94** (19.79)	4.50** (25.24)
BE	-0.29 (-1.56)	-0.22 (-1.41)	-0.42* (2.31)	-0.18 (-1.30)	-0.34* (-2.01)	-0.01 (-0.07)
CEDE	-0.60** (-2.82)	-0.28 (-1.57)	-0.51* (-2.52)	-0.12 (-0.79)	-0.32 (-1.66)	-0.43* (-2.48)
AB4+	-0.66** (-2.71)	-0.82** (-4.03)	-0.56* (-2.39)	-0.51** (-2.86)	-0.33 (-1.51)	-0.03 (-0.14)
PORT	0.68** (3.32)	0.33* (1.96)	0.50** (2.60)	0.34* (2.31)	0.45* (2.47)	0.14 (0.83)
R-square	0.17	0.15	0.13	0.09	0.08	0.07
Adj. R-Sq	0.15	0.12	0.10	0.06	0.06	0.04
F-stat(5,n-5)	7.34**	6.09**	5.31**	3.48**	3.21*	2.54*
n	148	149	148	149	148	144
White's test	9.94	10.10	9.29	4.40	8.61	6.86
critical value $\Pi^2$ (90%, 8 d.f.) = 13.36						

\*\* Rejects null hypothesis at 99% confidence level.

\* Rejects null hypothesis at 95% confidence level.

Table 4  
Influences on Instructor Ratings II

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable					
	Taught Well	Organized Presentation	Motivates	Prepared	Challenges	Unbiased
Constant	3.71** (14.78)	4.42** (20.58)	3.77** (16.09)	4.41** (24.40)	3.82** (17.25)	4.53** (22.70)
BE	-0.28 (-1.49)	-0.22 (-1.40)	-0.41* (-2.28)	-0.18 (-1.29)	-0.33* (-1.97)	-0.01 (-0.08)
CEDE	-0.05 (-0.13)	-0.24 (-0.73)	-0.10 (-0.26)	-0.08 (-0.28)	0.07 (0.19)	-0.53 (-1.65)
AB4+	-0.59** (-2.44)	-0.82** (-3.95)	-0.51* (-2.17)	-0.51** (-2.79)	-0.29 (-1.29)	-0.04 (-0.20)
PABE	0.88** (3.68)	0.34 (1.72)	0.65** (2.88)	0.36* (2.05)	0.59** (2.78)	0.10 (0.49)
PCDE	0.19 (0.51)	0.30 (0.96)	0.13 (0.36)	0.31 (1.12)	0.09 (0.28)	0.23 (0.79)
R-square	0.19	0.14	0.14	0.08	0.09	0.07
Adj. R-Sq	0.16	0.12	0.11	0.06	0.06	0.04
F-stat(6,n-6)	6.46**	4.85**	4.59**	2.77*	2.90*	2.05
n	148	149	148	149	148	144
White's test	10.58	10.10	8.84	4.44	8.71	6.95
critical value $\Pi^2$ (90%, 8 d.f.) = 13.36						

\*\* Rejects null hypothesis at 99% confidence level.

\* Rejects null hypothesis at 95% confidence level.

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## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> A list of 91 papers on classroom games in the teaching of economics is found at <http://www.people.virginia.edu/~cah2k/classy2k.htm>. More detailed information about conducting numerous games is located in the links found at <http://www.people.Virginia.EDU/~cah2k/teaching.html>. Sites visited on April 8, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The examinations consisted of a multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The examinations were not standardized across the different sections, but question topics were similar in depth, breadth, and difficulty.

<sup>3</sup> For the assignment of term grades, student scores were adjusted ('curved') to generate a class average of 75% and a distribution of grades consistent with a traditional 90, 80, 70, etc. percentage point grading scale. However, the samples of student scores that were examined for difference in means were not curved for an obvious reason.

<sup>4</sup> The student evaluation forms from both universities included comparable information regarding whether the course was well taught, organized, motivating, challenging, and whether the instructor was prepared and unbiased. Although one university's forms rated instructor characteristics on a four point scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) while the second university's forms included a fifth 'undecided' category between agree and disagree, this would tend to work against our results. First, the problem is partially mitigated by having one section each from the university using the 4 point scale forms in the portfolio and non-portfolio samples. Second, given that a majority of the ratings from the 5 point scale form were 'agree' or better, it can be inferred that the lack of a middle 'undecided' category would tend to bias the ratings from the four point scale forms in the upward (better) direction toward the 'agree' response. Given the smaller size of the non-portfolio sample, the upward bias in the sample average ratings would be larger relative to effect of the bias in the larger portfolio sample. Finally, given the structure of the test, the upward bias in the non-portfolio sample would tend to decrease the likelihood of observing a statistically significant difference between the average instructor rating across the two samples.

<sup>5</sup> The error term in the regression,  $\epsilon$ , is assumed to adhere to the standard assumptions of the classical linear regression model. It is a white noise error term.

<sup>6</sup> No students self-reported as expecting to fail the class.