1   Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is rooted in the belief that my responsibility as a professor is to cultivate curious and capable students who understand the objectives of political science and are prepared to be good citizens in their communities. My goals are three-fold: to assist in the civic education of my students; to help my students develop essential skills for success in career and society; and to facilitate further study of political science, public policy, and international relations.

My primary objective in undergraduate courses is to prepare students to engage, question and evaluate the political ideas, processes, and outcomes they will encounter throughout their lives. In class, I introduce students to concepts, theories, and methods essential to the discipline. I believe that I have a responsibility to help students see how those concepts and theories are reflected in the events around them. Many of the concepts addressed in political science — tragedy of the commons, public goods, collective action, etc. — require students to examine how individual incentives and behaviors impact groups and communities. My goal is for students to use such revelations to understand the world around them and inform their decisions outside of the university — hopefully producing more civically engaged and responsible citizens.

The conceptual frames and abstract theories, discussed above, help students to understand patterns of behavior and outcomes in the world around them. However, being able to actively and effectively engage the world requires additional skills. Although some would argue that a university education is simply a means of collecting information specific to a student's career goals, I believe that a university education should also be a means of developing broader skills that are necessary for success in a wide range of professional and personal endeavors. As a professor, I believe it is my responsibility to design my courses to help students develop these skills — including critical thinking, creative problem solving, evidence gathering, and writing proficiency. The development of each of these skills not only supports my first objective, but also reinforces other essential skills. For example, student's critical thinking skills improve as they gain proficiency in evidence gathering. Likewise, being asked to put their arguments into writing requires students to give greater attention to their justifications and thus improves critical thinking.

Finally, I have a responsibility to the discipline to recruit and train future colleagues. The obvious means by which I do this is through interactions with graduate students. In graduate classes, I design assignments intended to encourage greater theoretical thinking and promote the development of research ideas. Outside of class, I have been active in directing student research and assisting with professionalization. However, I also pursue this goal in my interactions with undergraduates. Although most of my undergraduate students aspire to careers outside of political science, a small number of students show considerable aptitude for political science as a discipline. I design my courses with the specific intention of providing undergraduates with the opportunity to practice political science. I know that for some of my students, these opportunities are simply one more assignment required in one more class required to graduate. But for a handful, these assignments have proven to be the catalyst for new curiosity and forays into more developed undergraduate research projects.

2 Course Design and Teaching Strategies

A problem focused course design is essential to achieving these objectives. In my experience, many students do not have the ability or inclination to thoroughly analyze problems. Like all people, students tend to reach decisions that reflect prior beliefs or a single-sided approach to problems. In order to encourage students to approach issues from multiple perspectives, I design my courses around puzzles — questions intended to repeatedly challenge the obvious or predetermined answers. By presenting continued challenges to simple answers, students quickly learn to expand their analysis.

Course design includes the selection and organization of class materials, the creation of assignments, and the structure of classroom interactions. Although textbooks are necessary to provide students with broad summaries of concepts and theories, I generally supplement this with problem-based readings. Early in the semester, this material may be new stories from sources like ProPublica or the Economist that provide competing views. I also use scholarly articles with competing positions throughout the semester. Not only do students enjoy the idea of journal articles being the means through which professors disagree, it also requires them to evaluate how theories are tested and the value of the the results. As the semester progresses, I often select material that only represents one view and ask students to evaluate the position. In these cases, students are required to evaluate theories and evidence using their critical thinking skill without relying on ideas presented in another article. Although my strategy focuses on challenging students' thinking, my objective is not to steer them away from taking positions. Instead, the purpose is to encourage students to think about how they've reached their decision and think critically about why they support those positions. By continually presenting different kinds of (and often conflicting) evidence, and acknowledging the complexities and subtleties of problems, I challenge students to reflect on the strengths and weakness of the processes they use to analyze problems.

In designing assignments I use a similar approach. For introductory level courses, I generally ask students to complete a series of short writing assignments. Generally students are asked to complete multiple short essays over the course of a semester. Essays at the beginning of the semester ask students to define and apply concepts and theories to events or problems. As the semester progresses, the assignments ask students to practice additional skills. Some assignments ask students to gather different kinds of evidence and draw a conclusions based on their research. Still others ask students to evaluate, or in some cases, devise policy solutions to a specific problem. In more advanced courses, I ask students to use their knowledge from class to evaluate or replicate the work of others. For example, in my Global Health class, I ask students to review popular non-fiction books such as *Demon in the Freezer* by Richard Preston, or *The Wisdom of Whores* by Elizabeth Pisani. In the Introduction to Political Analysis class (undergraduate methods), I ask students to replicate a political science article. In graduate courses, I ask students to write research designs, complete with research question, a developed theory, and testable hypotheses. Each of these assignments is designed with the intention of achieving my three objectives.

I approach preparing for class in a similar manner, with an eye toward balancing lecture, discussion and active-learning activities. Lecture is essential for the introduction of concepts and theories. Without clear introduction to concepts, students struggle to make sense of the complexity of international relations. Effective lectures enable students to better engage in readings, discussion and writing assignments. Thus, lecture provide the foundations on which the students will build throughout undergraduate courses.

I also use active-learning strategies to encourage student comprehension and retention. Any given class will include students with a variety of learning styles. Discussion is often a useful opportunity for students to explore ideas and practice the application of concepts and theories. Another option I make use of is small group activities or simulations. Small group activities provide more reserved students opportunities to interact with fellow students without the pressure of speaking in front of the entire class. I often use small group activities to illustrate concepts or to practice applying concepts to events.

By designing my courses around puzzles and problems students learn to apply concepts and knowledge from class to specific puzzles, a skill they practice repeatedly throughout the semester. Through classroom participation and writing assignments they practice essential skills such as critical thinking, writing, and evidence gathering. Finally, these assignments and activities provide students with a glimpse into the puzzle based world of political science. My courses as designed with the intention of challenging students to develop skills and acquire knowledge that they can carry with them beyond the university and that also support my objectives as an instructor.

3   Teaching Interests

Although I have had a wide range of teaching experiences, I am eager to establish a pattern of teaching a select collection of graduate and undergraduate course. I would be happy to teach International Political Economy and International Organization classes at the graduate and/or undergraduate levels. I enjoy teaching undergraduate methods and would happily teach an introductory level graduate methods course. In addition, I am eager to continue teaching the Global Politics of Health course I recently designed.

4   Statistical Summary of Teaching Evaluations

The table below presents the average ratings from student evaluations on the two representative questions:

- Question 1: Overall the instructor was effective.
    - 1 = strongly disagree
    - 2 = disagree
    - 3 = neutral
    - 4 = agree
    - 5 = strongly agree
- Question 11: Overall this course was a valuable learning experience.
    - 1 = strongly disagree
    - 2 = disagree
    - 3 = neutral
    - 4 = agree

- 5 = strongly agree

Term	Course	Question 1	Question 11
Fall 2011	PUAD 5348	4.67	4.50
Fall 2011	PUAD 5351	4.43	4.29
Spring 2012	PUAD 5341	3.00	2.64
Fall 2012	PUAD 5334	3.88	3.63
Fall 2012	PUAD 5352	4.33	4.33
Spring 2013	PUAD 5341	3.59	3.28
Fall 2013	POLS 3310	4.50	4.50
Fall 2013	POLS 3300	4.85	4.77
Fall 2013	POLS 5100	4.50	4.33
Spring 2014	POLS 3361	4.23	4.29
Spring 2014	POLS 3300	4.96	4.92