

Teaching Statement

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As a teacher and mentor, my primary objective is to foster an inclusive, dynamic learning environment where students are encouraged to think critically, engage with diverse perspectives, and apply their knowledge to real-world scenarios. Teaching and working with students have proved to be one of the most enjoyable and enriching parts of my academic career. Even as I have worked to develop an active and productive research agenda, I have sought out and embraced new teaching opportunities. My teaching interests span a broad range of topics in American Politics, Comparative Politics, Public Policy, and Quantitative Research Methods. I have already had the privilege of teaching several courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, including *Introduction to American Politics*, *Introduction to American Local Politics*, *Group Politics*, and *Quantitative Research Methods*. I am also willing and able to offer other courses that meet your department's needs, particularly those related to core interests in American politics (e.g., race and ethnic politics, Congress, the presidency, American public opinion), comparative politics (e.g., Chinese politics) and public policy (e.g., public finance, housing politics, public policy analysis, data analysis and visualization, etc.).

In my introductory courses (generally larger enrollment and open to first- and second-year students, and non-majors), I have three primary objectives. First, I aim to familiarize my students with the fundamental concepts and theories of political science. To achieve the first objective, I start by carefully selecting the most important and commonly discussed topics that students will encounter in their subsequent studies when designing my syllabus. For example, in my *Introduction to American Politics* course, I introduce different models of representation, such as the Burkean and Delegate models, and then engage students in an in-class discussion about which model they believe would best support a democratic and accountable government. This interactive approach not only equips them with a foundational understanding of basic theories in political science but also encourages them to think critically about these theories. Additionally, I employ a variety of instructional methods to effectively demonstrate key concepts. For instance, to help students grasp the concept of the Prisoner's Dilemma in game theory, I employ an illustrative method using the game show "Golden Balls." By demonstrating how players attempt to either split or steal prizes, I make the abstract concept more tangible and engaging, connecting it to a real-world scenario that enhances students' interest.

Second, I strive to cultivate their critical thinking skills by encouraging them to articulate well-reasoned opinions and stay informed about current political events. I aim to cultivate my students' habits of independent thinking and encourage them to consume information from diverse, high-quality sources. For instance, in my *Introduction to American Politics* class, I ask students to keep a journal documenting their daily information consumption. To keep them informed about current events, I encourage them to explore various sources beyond the textbook, including podcasts, investigative journalism pieces, and high-quality op-eds from leading outlets.

Third, I focus on enhancing my students' analytical thinking by linking political science concepts to real-life scenarios. I dedicate sessions to minority representation in Congress, presenting both the progress and challenges of using data. I encourage students to propose ideas for promoting minority representation from different vantages, such as through changes in electoral rules, campaign finance regulations, and addressing racial/ethnic stereotypes. Additionally, I discuss the causes of public opinion and voting behavior, such as partisanship, socialization, values, predispositions, and reality. In a subsequent session, students come prepared with their calculations and predictions for the upcoming elections, using learned concepts to develop their forecasts.

For my upper-division classes (typically smaller enrollments attended by upperclassmen), I design courses with the goal of transforming my students into discerning consumers of both classic and cutting-edge academic research, and encouraging them to contribute to the scientific study of politics. While I recognize that few students will pursue careers in academia, learning to analyze political phenomena using data and evidence, and to evaluate opinions with a critical and skeptical eye, will benefit them in any career they choose to pursue. In my *Group Politics* class, for example, the reading materials primarily consist of influential political science research articles that utilize either observational data or experimental methods. One of the major assignments for this class is for students to write responses to selected papers. The goal is not only to review these papers but also to critically assess whether they agree with the core arguments and to suggest ways to improve the research design to enhance either external or internal validity. This assignment enables me to guide students in learning how to read academic papers and provide them with constructive feedback on their suggestions for future research improvements and ideas.

In my Introduction to Research Methods class, I focus on two fundamental concepts. The first core idea is causal inference, where I introduce students to the potential outcomes model and fundamental principles of statistical inference. The second core idea involves data analysis and visualization, with an emphasis on using the R computing platform for practical applications. To facilitate learning, I select influential research papers for students to replicate, highlighting essential concepts and coding techniques. For example, I guide students through a step-by-step replication of a classical minimum wages and employment study, illustrating various observational study strategies, such as difference-in-differences. By the end of the course, students are expected to produce a comprehensive short research letter encompassing a hypothesis, research design, descriptive statistics, statistical inference, and final results. Recognizing the challenges political science undergraduates face in grasping statistics and using R, I invest considerable effort in explaining the code, addressing questions during and after classes, and holding extra office hours for additional support. My commitment to this course stems from my belief in the value of these skills, not only in academia but also in many private industries. By equipping students with robust data analysis and data science skills, I am preparing them for successful future careers.

As a first-generation college student myself, I can relate to the difficulties and challenges faced by my students. I try to support my students both in and out of the classroom in various roles. Working at a large public university, I am acutely aware of the diverse backgrounds of my students. Some are international students from affluent families, while others struggle to afford a laptop for the Research Methods class. Therefore, I place a strong emphasis on promoting equity and diversity. I incorporate in-class discussions to engage students with different perspectives, fostering an inclusive environment where all voices are heard. For students struggling financially to afford a laptop for coding work, I offer my extra laptop during office hours. I try to ensure that everyone in the class has the necessary tools to succeed in the course. Outside of the classroom, students frequently come to me questions and problems. As one student put it, "I can actually talk to you." They seek my advice on issues such as adjusting to different instructional styles, changing majors, making future career choices, and preparing for graduate school applications. I am committed to providing thoughtful advice and support, helping my students navigate their academic and personal journeys.

I believe my teaching experience has demonstrated my strong dedication and passion for education. I am confident that I have the skills and knowledge required to make a positive contribution to any department and university. If given the opportunity to teach in your department and university, I will do everything I can to ensure the success of my students. I will leverage my expertise to create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment, employing innovative teaching methods and providing personalized support. My goal is to inspire and equip my students with the tools they need to excel academically and prepare them for future success.