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Statement of Teaching Philosophy

My goal as a professor of political science is to develop in my students critical thinking and analytic skills to help them become savvy participants in a world of frequently unvetted information. Further, my goal is to structure the class emphasizing student engagement and participation in an effort to help them meaningfully relate to course content and create a lasting educational experience. At Michigan State University I have accumulated a rich set of experiences which inform my approach to teaching. I have taught four discussion sections, two for Introduction to Comparative Politics and two for Introduction to Political Science (currently). I have also been a Teaching Assistant twice for Introduction to International Relations and separately International Organizations, and have participated in detailed teaching workshops designed for graduate students by the Department of Political Science. Throughout these experiences I learned the importance of a backwards design approach to course development, as well as creating active learning opportunities for students. I am very interested to teach graduate and undergraduate courses in International Relations, International Political Economy, International Organizations, and Globalization. Additionally, I would enjoy teaching undergraduate courses in research design / statistical analysis. Below, I list my experiences as a TA, what motivates me as a teacher, and my plan for accomplishing my teaching goals.

Student Engagement

One of my biggest aims as a teacher is to make the subject engaging, fun, and to help the students make connections between the course material and real-world events. As a Teaching Assistant for Introduction to International Relations, each class began with group presentations relating course content to Wall Street Journal articles I selected. We received very strong feedback that they found this an enriching exercise which often led to class discussions and meaningfully improved their interest in the subject. As a consequence, I found it a very successful approach to student engagement which I will continue to use.

Another means of facilitating student engagement is with the use of creative writing assignments. For instance, asking students to write analytic essays assuming the role of a presidential advisor is a useful way of making course material accessible. For an International Political Economy class, I would ask students to write a policy recommendation for President Trump regarding whether China should be labeled a currency manipulator. In this assignment, I would have them address issues such as the appropriateness of attributing moral implications to monetary policy, an assessment of whether China in fact is "arbitrarily" suppressing their currency value, as well as the foreign policy ramifications of such a move. In my syllabus for an introductory class on International Relations, I have another such assignment asking students to pose as the National Security Advisor and make a policy recommendation regarding signing of the Iran Nuclear Deal. I also plan to utilize prominent public examples to highlight important themes. For instance, I would play congressional videos of Ron Paul questioning Ben Bernanke about the merits of fiat money vs the Gold Standard as an introduction to exchange rate issues (and central banking). Above all, the goal of these assignments is to make the content more engaging to students such that they may embrace content which might otherwise appear dry or un compelling.

Broader goals

Besides my approach to teaching content, I have long believed that *all students* should leave my class as deeper critical thinkers and with greater scrutiny of their informational sources. This is crucial in light of the omnipresence of non-credible “news” websites. I strive to accomplish this with an emphasis on essay-based assignments which emphasize the need for legitimate sources and a resolute discussion about the undervalued importance of this theme.

Additionally, critical thinking skills are crucial in all aspects of life, and I intend to promote such skills as well. As much as possible, I intend to develop these traits by giving critical thinking essay assignments, structuring in-class debates around possibly controversial concepts, as well as argumentative essays advocating a position contrary to their own.

Courses

I have a syllabus for Introduction to International Relations to illustrate how I would teach this course. In it, I start with several chapters from Henry Kissinger’s *Diplomacy* book, woven in between chapters in Frieden, Lake and Schultz’s textbook on World Politics. I believe one of the most exciting aspects of International Relations involves the play-by-play strategic decision-making of nations, and Kissinger’s *Diplomacy* does an excellent job of drawing out such examples. It’s also motivates perfectly subsequent discussions about the IR paradigms. I thus start by emphasizing the diplomatic history of international relations, then transitioning to an emphasis on modern analytic approaches. In the second half of this course, I pivot to discuss International Political Economy topics. Here, I augment the reading list to include Dani Rodrik’s very readable book “The Globalization Paradox” in combination with Martin Wolf’s “Why Globalization Works” in order to give the students a more intuitive flavor for how issues of globalization play out in the real world. I bolster the reading list throughout with choice examples from *Foreign Affairs* and *Project Syndicate* to emphasize key themes, in an effort to help them connect more deeply with such topics.

In my syllabus for my research methods class, I start with an emphasis on philosophy of science literature because I believe it is an intellectually richer and more motivating way to introduce the content to students. I try to use popular topics to help motivate the class, an example of which is a class in which we discuss and debate the statistical analysis of Tom Brady’s potential guilt in the “Deflategate” controversy. For similar reasons, the main text I have assigned is Charles Wheelan’s *Naked Statistics*, as I believe it helps students make the mental connection that data can be exciting. The single best way to engage the students, however, is to give them an opportunity to work with data directly on a subject they care about. At first, I have students begin to think about very basic research ideas they find interesting. In a subsequent short essay assignment, they need to have chosen one idea, discuss what some scholars have said about it, and then lay out their approach to investigate the issue. The real point of this assignment is to get them excited about and connected to data analysis. After having an in-class lab where I help the students begin to analyze their data, I have them submit a final report with their findings and conclusions.