

# TEACHING STATEMENT

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My undergraduate education at Austin Peay University was probably the most important experience in influencing my view of teaching. Since it was a liberal arts college, there was a large emphasis placed on teaching, and because of the nearby military base it serviced a large number of non-traditional students. Working as both a student worker and a tutor for the department, I had a first-hand experience seeing how important getting an education was for individuals from all walks of life: the traditional undergrad, soldiers looking to go up the ranks or wanting to transition to civilian life, or even something as simple as an elderly man wanting to finish a degree he had started years ago out of a sense of pride. Crammed together in a basement office, I was able to witness how the faculty interacted with students with patience and kindness both in and out of the classroom and how doing so motivated students to push themselves.

Now a professor myself, I have been using the last several years of teaching to develop my skills so I could better emulate those professors I had admired as an undergraduate, and I like to think that it has started to pay off. As one student's evaluation from my Fall 2017 Intro to American Government class stated, "I don't think I will ever have a professor like him in the future. The patience and kindness he had for me made me want to try harder."

## **Substantive Course Experience**

When designing my courses, I usually work with an understanding that the majority of students are in the field not to become academics. As such, my goal in any course is to distill in students an appreciation for what political science has to offer through developing assignments that push students to engage with material in a hands-on approach. My primary method for doing this is to focus on providing students assignments that ask them to take the material presented and apply it to a question or task. For example, during the week discussing the process of how news is made and the influence of markets on that decisions in my Mass Media and Politics, students are asked to write a news article which is "published" on the class forum for students to rate. The article that gets the most engagement receives extra credit (profit), simulating a real life media market.

My first teaching experience was in teaching an Introduction to American Government course, which at Stony Brook University presented a unique challenge. With a large foreign-born student body, a significant number of students did not have the pre-existing background knowledge that American-raised students would have for an American politics course. Therefore, I worked to incorporate into lectures and reading assignments research that used mixed-method approaches, such as Corrine McConnaughy's work on the suffrage movement that included case studies. This allowed for both exposure to current political science work and informed students unfamiliar with American history about information useful for understanding American politics. It also has the added bonus of helping students see the wide variety of methodological approaches one can take when doing political science research.

I have also been responsible for teaching an online Mass Media and Politics course during summer semesters. The central goal of the course was to help students recognize how research on media and political communications could help them become a more engaged and active consumer when

consuming political news. Initially, student learning was assessed through assignments that asked students to find and analyze media based on the main themes from that week's lessons. For example, in the first week we cover the legal and economic framework under which media operates in the United States. Students are then asked to compare and contrast media from the United States versus a more authoritarian country and discuss differences in how the media discusses political leaders and the opposition and why those differences occur. Over this previous summer, however, I tried out the aforementioned media market assignment and received positive feedback from students. I also experimented with a group project as the final paper in the form of a campaign advertisement assignment, which encouraged students to think critically about how campaigns target voters and how that is influenced by mass media technology and processes.

Finally, the previous two semesters I taught an upper-level undergraduate course in American Political Ideology. Being the first course where I had relatively large amount of freedom in how to design it, I took it as a chance to experiment with my approach. I reached out to several experts in the field for advice on both content and the structure of the course. In developing the course material, I decided to focus on an in-depth exploration of both the content of and histories of modern liberalism and conservatism. I incorporated work from political development, political psychology, and historians to flesh out the story of how the current ideological system came to be. For student assessment, I focused primarily on developing group-based assignments. The most popular of these were the policy debates, in which two groups debated on policies I found that reflected the topic that week, such as using Elizabeth Warren's proposal to have labor represented on corporate boards during the week on modern liberal economic thought. Responses from students have been generally positive, especially for the debates.

One common thread over the years is that as I've become more comfortable in the classroom, I have more ambitious with the type of assignments I use, and am continuing to do so as I begin to think of potential future courses I teach. For example, future versions of the American Ideology course, or a course on Political Parties, may include a policy platform simulation where students develop a party platform through committees and convention vote, simulating the coalition building process real parties deal with. Overall, I believe that such hands-on application of knowledge is highly beneficial to students and helps them learn to appreciate the use of political science in understanding the political world.

## **Teaching Interests**

In addition to the undergraduate courses discussed above, at the undergraduate level I would also be interested in teaching courses on topics such as political parties, campaigns and elections, voting behavior, introductory political psychology, or special topics in political psychology such as identity politics or emotions. I would also be qualified for teaching undergraduate level methods courses in quantitative methods courses and specialized topics such as experimental design or causal inference. While I do not currently have experience teaching graduate level courses, I would be qualified in teaching substantive courses that center around topics such as political parties, elections, ideology, and social identity/group processes. For methods, I would be particularly interested in teaching courses that center around a practical approach to methodology by focusing on exploring a variety of methods and their uses, such as a course centered around experimental design or causal inference.