

Teaching Statement

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In my classes, students learn to analyze world events using theories and techniques in political science. My students apply ideas about world politics to historical and contemporary events to understand when and why they occur. They learn to use analytical techniques in their own research projects, other coursework, and their survey of current affairs. At the end of these courses, my students gain not only a good understanding of scholarly work but also an enhanced ability to analyze historical and contemporary events in world politics through well-developed perspectives. They learn to take disparate world events and form explanations that tie them together. They also learn to view those events as patterns – not discretely, as they may sometimes appear.

In six of the nine discussion sections I led at Princeton University, my students learned theories of international relations in political science. I first sought to build their understanding of theoretical perspectives in the field of International Relations using foundational texts, mixed with historical cases. They learned about earlier theories and how subsequent ones differed – and where the improvements or differences were most apparent. We then applied the theories to specific cases such as the origins of World War I, the emergence of human rights regimes, and the increasing political attention to climate change. This mixture of theory and cases helped to illustrate and contextualize the theoretical ideas to make them more apparent by pairing them with real-world events, past and present. The use of both foundational texts and historical works provided the students with several opportunities to apply their analytical skills on a case-by-case basis. At the end of these courses, they had developed a more systematic view of world politics, which they could use to interpret current events and recent history more critically than when they had entered the course.

In the remaining three discussion sections, my students debated emergent tensions between national security and civil liberties in contemporary America, without the same degree of attention to theory. Unlike the International Relations course for which I taught twice, this course focused on very recent – indeed ongoing – discussions over how to manage the tension between protecting civil liberties and maintaining national security during the post-9/11 era. My students used electronic sources from federal government webpages and speeches, as well as newspaper articles, to detail how public debates evolved on this issue. By the end of the course, my students understood that their previously held positions on protecting civil liberties at nearly all costs and against nearly all dangers invited complicated issues, like when the government should wire-tap phone calls or protect sources of intelligence.

More recently, I co-taught a research methods lab for undergraduate students in the Woodrow Wilson School and advised three seniors in the Department of Politics on their senior

theses. The research methods lab was designed to provide an overview of different methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to provide students with analytical tools for writing their junior papers. Students had practical questions related to their projects and learned why some methods are useful in addressing their own research questions. They also learned how to decide when and why mixed methods would be helpful, providing them with not only a foundation for their junior papers but also a baseline for their senior theses. In advising three undergraduate students on their senior theses, I helped my advisees understand all the essential characteristics of a political science research project. They learned question formulation, research design, hypothesis development and testing, and analytical presentation. They wrote impressive senior theses on different topics in energy policy and environmental governance. Each of my advisees learned the basics of political science research in a large-format setting – their senior thesis.

At Washington University in St. Louis, I taught two courses for undergraduates. The Fall course introduced theories and cases of international institutions. I developed an original syllabus to provide a roadmap for my students as they learn how to understand and interpret the roles of international institutions in world politics. Although designed as a lecture course, my students and I have had open discussion relevant to important literature on international institutions in political science. With each session, built a greater analytical foundation for interpreting contemporary events involving international organizations like the United Nations. By the end of the term, they had an empirically and theoretically informed knowledge base regarding international institutions, which we will then use to address questions on future of international institutions and their legitimacy. The Spring course provided students with a similarly broad and deep overview of international environmental politics through classroom discussion and lectures.

As Assistant Professor, I would help my students understand contemporary and historical issues in international environmental policy and international institutions by combining theory and evidence from political science. I would also use multiple pedagogical techniques in discussion sections aimed at applying the ideas learned during my lectures and from the readings to have them discuss the ideas amongst themselves, furthering their grasp of the material. Students would understand why mitigating climate change and biodiversity loss are challenging global problems, politically and institutionally, and which policies could reduce environmental harms in light of the political constraints on government actions. They would learn how international institutions can help governments overcome barriers to collective action in world politics. They would also learn to use research design techniques in political science for their future projects and coursework. This would enable them to make sound inferences using a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods in their future coursework or independent projects.