

My teaching philosophy is in many ways motivated by these unusual times: Across the globe, democracy and pluralism are receding while authoritarianism and nativism are rising. We possess vast stores of data and the means to process them, but we are as poor as ever in critical thinking. My teaching responds to these trends by seeking to cultivate more engaged, informed, and intellectually independent citizens with the necessary skills to interpret the world around them. I achieve this objective in each of my courses by guiding students as they (i) apply theoretical frameworks to analyze real-life political phenomena and (ii) develop their ability to communicate openly and persuasively in oral and written dialogue.

Drawing on six years of both teaching undergraduate and graduate students, I believe that my courses should not simply impart knowledge but enhance students' analytical skills. My courses therefore focus on developing theoretical frameworks and then helping students use these frameworks to analyze contemporary political processes. I often begin classes by asking students to analyze a relevant news story in teams of 4 to 5, encouraging them to carefully link theory and empirical evidence as they determine an appropriate framework. For instance, after a lecture on democratic transitions and breakdown in my Introduction to Comparative Politics course, students analyzed a short article about a failed coup in Venezuela in 2019. This prompted discussion of competing theories about the role of foreign influence and actor miscalculation in processes of regime change. My focus on real-life application of theoretical concepts extends to my methods courses. In a recent class on hypothesis testing, students dissected the statistical appendix from *State of Texas v. the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, *State of Georgia*, *State of Michigan*, and *State of Wisconsin*, in which the lawsuit authors use hypothesis tests to substantiate allegations of fraud in the 2020 US presidential election. This task catalyzed a lively discussion about the importance of rooting statistical evidence in credible assumptions and logic.

As these examples suggest, I am always seeking opportunities for student-led learning. This is motivated by my belief that students learn most productively when they are encouraged to draw on their prior knowledge and individual engagement of the course material to teach and learn from each other. While this is most easily done in seminars in which I can regularly divide students into small teams, I promote student-to-student learning in large lectures by asking "class questions" that students discuss with their immediate neighbors. For instance, in Introduction to Comparative Politics, I might show students that land redistribution is more common in autocracy than democracy. Then, rather than simply lay out the leading theories that seek to explain this empirical pattern (though I eventually do this too), I ask students to discuss their own explanations. After 5 to 7 minutes of discussion, I reconvene the class and ask several volunteers to share their answers. Ultimately, my aim is for students to generate and share original ideas, not arrive at a single "correct answer" (though students' answers often do parallel those given by scholars).

My emphasis on student-led learning extends to my remote courses. When I created the remote versions of Social Science Inquiry II and III, I wanted students to be able to engage with me and each other throughout. I therefore restructured my traditional lectures as interactive modules that I posted to my personal website. The online modules were interactive because they asked students to complete a variety of tasks between video lectures that I intentionally limited to 5 to 15 minutes each. In the videos, I continued my practice of encouraging students to pause and answer "class questions." By moving the lecture content online, I allowed students to engage the course material at their own pace. It also allowed me to devote our regular lecture time to discussion meetings with individual teams of just 4 to 5 students each. Many students ultimately identified this novel structure as one of the most valuable aspects of my

remote courses, since—as one student put it—it “allowed the instructor to interact with everyone and students to interact with each other.”

My courses also emphasize persuasive written and oral reasoning. To develop their ability and confidence in this area, I have found that students need regular practice in a supportive environment. I therefore often assign short, low-stakes written assignments that require students to take a position on a question (“Is democracy good?”) and then support their position with credible logic and empirical evidence. To help students develop their reasoning, I provide them with detailed feedback that emphasizes analysis over description: “What assumption are you making here? Is it credible?” or “This piece of evidence is consistent with the alternative view. What piece of evidence would better undermine the alternative?” When I assign research papers, I leverage them as opportunities for developing persuasive writing skills by dividing them into small, manageable components and allowing students to revise each component following multiple rounds of instructor and peer feedback.

I have found that, like me, many students learn best when they lay out their arguments in oral conversation. To promote this, I often ask students to present research in the form of a 3- to 5-minute podcast. The scripted yet conversational format helps students order their ideas while translating them into straightforward language. As with written assignments, I always provide detailed feedback on students’ podcasts. My favorite technique for promoting oral reasoning, however, is a lively debate. To model healthy democratic discourse, I make these debates multi-sided. For instance, rather than ask “Should countries redistribute wealth?” I might ask “What is an acceptable level of wealth inequality in a democracy?” or “Which policy most effectively and fairly redistributes wealth in a democracy?” While traditional two-sided debate carries the risk of reinforcing societal polarization, multi-sided debate helps students identify opportunities for compromise by allowing for overlap among their different positions.

As this last example suggests, I want students to develop the sort of deliberative and open communication that makes for healthy discourse in a pluralist democracy. This requires, above all, that students learn to engage each other as human citizens. I therefore begin my courses by asking students to share their respective biographies and concerns about the course in teams of 4 to 5. In addition, I often use role-play to encourage empathy and help students discover their own preconceptions. For instance, in Introduction to Comparative Politics, I might ask a group of students to adopt the role of a poor voter who demands cultural recognition instead of economic redistribution. Throughout, I couple these empathy-building tasks with explicit discussion about the nature of democratic discourse. Before students workshop their independent research with each other, for instance, we discuss what it means for feedback to be simultaneously critical and constructive, and we develop specific examples of such feedback together, recording them at the board. We also develop specific examples that violate the criteria, and we discuss why such feedback is unhelpful and often harmful.

I recount these experiences knowing that I can continue to grow as a teacher and, in doing so, more effectively motivate my students to be the most thoughtful and independent scholars they can be. Even so, at the end of every course, I have been delighted to discover that many students have developed the analytical skills and self-confidence to tackle new questions or even challenge my own thinking. As a teacher, there is no greater reward.