

# Teaching Philosophy

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My teaching philosophy is centered around three principles: be accessible, be relevant, and be challenging. First and foremost, instruction should be *accessible*. As a teaching assistant and instructor, I have implemented several policies to promote accessibility. I am cognizant of the fact that students have different learning styles, so I always try to present information in a new format. For example, if students saw a bullet point list of definitions in lecture, I review the material in the form of a chart or table in section. If the topic permits, I will present information previously given in words as simple mathematical equations (for example, dividing a dollar as a mental frame for the bargaining range) or graphically. Whenever I present the information in a different format, I emphasize that students do not need to learn the material this way, but that some students might find the technique useful.

I offer a variety of types of assignments and ways that students can earn points. Because some students, especially minority students and international students, are not as willing to speak publicly in sections, I allow for students to earn participation points through written summaries of assigned readings, course policies permitting. In my summer course, I ensure that there are a variety of types of assignments in which students are graded; I do not just have exams, but use a combination of attendance, short quizzes, a position paper, and a final exam to determine final grades. If students do not feel they are good at test-taking, they can bolster their course grade by performing better on the position paper, and vice versa.

I stress the importance of a tolerant and inclusive classroom. In discussion-based courses especially, it is important that students feel that their views are welcome, particularly when they are in the minority. In foreign policy classes, when students make critical remarks about the current administration that other students challenge, I direct the discussion toward theories we have learned in the course. For example, after the 2016 election, students were discussing what President Trump meant for American foreign policy, with some students pessimistic, and others more defensive. I reminded the students that these views are also represented in the literature: some scholars we had read argued that individuals mattered, while others treated the state as a unitary actor. These theories would make different predictions about the effect of President Trump on foreign policy.

Second, I believe that instruction should be *relevant* to students' lives, both in other courses and outside of the classroom. I aspire to teach theoretical and methodological frameworks in an engaging way that encourages students to use these tools to explain present-day problems in international politics. As an instructor for the undergraduate course in international law, I guide students through academic articles and position papers on topics in the news, like the legal use of force; the ongoing conflict in the South China Sea; and what can be done about the crisis in Syria. Since many students taking international law plan to attend law school, I teach them not only the course content, but also memorization and study techniques that they can use later.

When teaching methods courses, I am always aware that students have varying degrees of comfort with mathematics. To that end, I make sure to provide the intuition, in words, behind any model I present. Whenever possible, I connect the model to substantive questions with which students are familiar to help ground them in the literature. I also make connections to previous or future courses students might take. For example, to help motivate graduate students through more difficult topics in Math Camp, I connected each lecture to specific courses in the first-year methods sequence (both quantitative and formal) so they could answer the perennial question "Why do I need to know this?"

Finally, instruction should be *challenging*. I do not enjoy testing rote memorization, so I strive whenever possible to create assignments that test critical thinking. For example, my writing assignment in international law requires students to apply what they have learned about the rules of international law to a current

crisis, like the Zika outbreak in Brazil, or the treatment of the Rohingya people in Myanmar. In another course, instead of having students describe the Prisoners' Dilemma on the midterm exam, I challenged them to apply what they had learned about the game theory models in international relations to identify Prisoners' Dilemmas in new contexts. Students often comment in their evaluations that my courses are demanding, but ultimately rewarding and worthwhile.