

PS495A: TEACHING POLITICAL SCIENCE

Spring 2023

Instructor:	Julian Michel	Time:	Thursday, 4pm-5:50pm
Email:	julianmichel@ucla.edu	Place:	Kaplan A68
Office Hours:	By Appointment		

Course Description

Welcome to PS495A! This class is the first in a two-quarter sequence that serves to convey the principles of evidence-based teaching. Even though academic careers require us to serve as instructors for decades, many graduate programs do not teach students "how to teach." To address this mismatch, we will use our meetings to think carefully about how best to facilitate student learning. To this end, we will explore strategies to actively engage students, moderate discussions, and explain content. Further, we will hear from (a) recent graduates now employed at teaching-oriented universities and (b) experienced TAs about their experiences and best practices. Finally, we will have guest speakers who will help introduce campus resources relevant to your role as a TA. Throughout the quarter, we will explore the current research on teaching pedagogy. Our ultimate goal is not only to pick up the tools needed to become an effective TA, but to build skills that will accompany you throughout your academic career.

Expectations and Grading

This class is targeted at Political Science Ph.D. students who will TA for the first time next quarter. Grading will be on a pass/ no pass basis. To obtain a passing grade you'll need to meet the following requirements:

- *Attendance:* Attendance is mandatory. If you can't make it, please let me know in advance so that we can find a substitute assignment.
- *Reading Assignments:* We won't have many readings, but when we do, it is imperative that you complete the readings before section. You can access them via our class website.
- *Two one-page reflections on your teaching observations:* You will be asked to find two TAs in your subfield who are willing to let you observe their teaching. (If you don't know many upper-years yet, no worries, I'll be happy to get you in touch.) Your task will be to attend their sections - two visits in total - and observe how they approach teaching. Take notes on strategies that you found particularly effective and write a one-page reflection paper for each visit. This paper should discuss (1) what the strategies employed were and (2) what you liked about them. Both papers are due before our last meeting in week 10.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1 - 04/06: Introductions & Goal Setting

- Welcome and introductions
- TA rights and responsibilities
- Reflecting on positive teaching experiences
- Navigating being both teacher and researcher
- Thinking about the future: TAing and the academic job market

Recommended readings:

- Webb, D. A. 2005: [Twelve Easy Steps to Becoming an Effective Teaching Assistant](#).
- Genovese 2021: [Teaching is Hard: A Political Scientist's Reflections on Good Teaching](#).
- Berardo, Ramiro 2011: [Speaking with an Accent: Some Practical Advice for Foreign First-Time Teachers](#).
- Lindsay, Peter 2018: [The Craft of University Teaching](#).

Week 2 - 04/13: Teaching Strategies & Union Presentation

- Setting tone and expectations
- Overview: Active learning strategies
- Moderating & Animating discussions
- If we have time: Principles of lesson planning

Recommended readings:

- McCarthy and Anderson 2000: [Active Learning Techniques Versus Traditional Teaching Styles: Two Experiments from History and Political Science](#)
- Schleutker 2021: [Seven Suggestions for Teaching Quantitative Methods](#)
- Rom and Mitchell 2021: [Teaching Politics in a Call-Out and Cancel Culture](#)
- Online Resource I: [Active Learning Strategies](#)
- Online Resource II: [Description of Active Learning Approaches \(U-Toronto\)](#)
- Online Resource III: [Active Learning in Online Teaching \(UCLA\)](#)

Week 3 - 04/20: CAT Presentation on Inclusive Pedagogy

- Dyese Elliott-Newton from the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) will talk to us about best practices in creating inclusive classrooms

Week 4 - 04/27: Experienced TA Panel

- Panel with advanced TAs from diverse subfields on effective teaching/ life as a TA at UCLA, including a Q&A

Week 5 - 05/04: Careers at Teaching-Intensive Universities: Online Panel With Recent Graduates (will take place from 9-10:30am PST over Zoom)

- What is working at a SLAC/LAC like?
- How to prepare for careers outside R1s?
- How to build a convincing teaching portfolio?
- How is applying to R1s different from SLACs/LACs/R2s?

Week 6 - 05/11: Canvas Training

- How to create class content (modules/ assignments/ etc.)
- Grading: Mechanics and strategies
- Detecting plagiarism and AI-generated answers
- Communicating with the class
- Useful apps with and without CCLE integration

Week 7 - 05/18: No Class - Please Use This Week to Observe Two Upper-Year TAs!

- If you'd like me to get you in touch with advanced TAs in your field, please let me know!

Week 8 - 05/25: Setting Yourself Up For a Great TA Experience

- How the TA selection process works
- How to learn about classes in advance
- Reflecting on what you want to get out of TAing
- How to avoid contentious situations: grading disputes, "boundary-crossing" students, unreasonable expectations
- TA workflow: Being organized & avoiding procrastination
- Introduction: Principles of syllabus design & curriculum development

Recommended readings:

- Online Resource I: [UCLA's collection on inclusive syllabus design](#)
- Online Resource II: [Bruinwalk](#)

Week 9 - 06/01: Mentoring

- Nurturing the next generation of Political Scientists inside and outside section
- Breaking down barriers: Helping students get research experience and to consider academic careers
- "Institutionalized" mentoring in our department:
 - the "Race, Ethnicity, Politics and Society Lab"
 - the "Undergraduate Research Experience" program
 - Mentorship program for Ph.D. students
- External research opportunities for undergraduates: RA gigs/ dedicated summer schools/ conference panels

Recommended readings:

- Pérez 2023: [Scouting and Growing Diverse Undergraduate Talent: UCLA's Race, Ethnicity, Politics & Society Lab](#)

Week 10 - 06/08: Final Meeting & Course Evaluations

- What course evaluations tell us about teaching quality
- Avoiding well-known biases in evaluations when TA is not white, male, or a native speaker
- Alternative ways of assessing how well students learned
- Writing letters of recommendation
- Teaching your own (Summer) class

Recommended readings:

- Foster 2023: [Instructor Name Preference and Student Evaluations of Instruction](#)
- Flaherty 2021: [The Skinny on Teaching Evals and Bias](#)
- Safier 2020: [4 Amazing Recommendation Letter Templates](#)

Teaching Resources

- [UCLA TA handbook](#): Information about your role as a TA, university policy, information about the composition for the student body, and practical and helpful tips for getting ready to teach, approaches to instruction, and much more.
- [Center for the Advancement of Teaching](#): Guidelines, workshops and further resources helping you to improve your teaching. Also offers small grants to finance teaching-related expenses.
- [Writing Center](#): Excellent resource to assist with writing assignments. Students can make appointments at the writing center to have someone work with them one on one to develop a thesis, learn how to organize ideas, or get assistance on effective proofreading strategies.
- [APSA Resources on Teaching](#): A collection of documents and videos on how to teach in Political Science.
- [UCLA Library teaching toolkit](#): Provides a variety of handouts, interactive online modules, and other activities that you can include in your course to help your students with the research process.

Additional Resources

- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): (310) 825-0768
- [The Office of the Ombudsman, Mediation and Dispute Resolution Resources](#): (310) 825-7627
- [Title IX Office / Sexual Harassment Prevention](#): (310) 206-3417
- [College Academic Counseling](#): (310) 825-3382
- [Library Research Consultations for Undergraduates](#)

Acknowledgement

This syllabus draws on information compiled by previous instructors of this class - most notably Mack Eason, Angela Gutierrez, Roey Reichert, and Frank Wyer.