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Teaching Statement

I am passionate in teaching American Politics and Political Methodology. I hold a deep enthusiasm for teaching. I believe that a teacher – who transmits knowledge, facilitates for study and dispels confusion – is an essential part of the academic community and is the foundation for the creation of knowledge.

The University of Chicago is a great platform that provides me with rich pedagogical experiences and primes me as a qualified and enthusiastic teacher. The Department of Political Science requires PhD students to undertake the equivalent of five teaching credits, now I have completed ten (including teaching assistantship, teaching internship, and individual teaching). To highlight my pedagogical training, I twice served as the head TA for William Howell's *The American Presidency*, where I not only led the weekly small group TA session but also coordinated the mid-term and final exam question writing and grading. The approach to teaching that I developed during my TA experiences was only enhanced in the recent two years of teaching experiences. In the 2018–2019 academic year, I co-taught the sequence of undergraduate core classes, *Social Sciences Inquiry*, as a teaching intern. In the 2020 winter quarter, then, I individually taught my own course, *Social Science Inquiry II: Quantitative Analysis and Vote Choice Theory*. In this course, I designed my own syllabus and used the American Voter literature and ANES data to guide students in using quantitative data to explore social scientific theories.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

During my teaching experiences, I have developed my own teaching philosophy that can be summarized by the three principles: (1) Be a Facilitator, (2) Be Structured, and (3) Be Passionate and Be Focused. I will now elaborate each of these principles and demonstrate how I execute them in the course, *Social Science Inquiry II*, which I individually taught at the University of Chicago in the 2020 Winter quarter.

Be a Facilitator

During my teaching, my role is to assist students to explore new concepts and gaining knowledge for themselves. Of course, there is a time and place that I convey knowledge to students via lectures and on the whiteboard. But I encourage opportunities for student-led learning – I hope my students will engage with me and with one another.

In this small seminar, *Social Science Inquiry II*, I facilitate students to actively learn. I always divide the 18 students into groups of 4 or 5 students. Then, I demonstrate the main arguments or points by writing on the board (and I particularly like to use the board because it is more engaging and avoids the class from being too fast paced), and present a question (or series of questions). I then let the students talk with their group members for 10 to 15 minutes. For example, in the class when we discuss the vote choice theory, I introduce the course of voting research, from Early Studies, to the Columbia School, and to the Michigan School, and write the bullet points on the board. Then, I raise the question, “what factors determine a person’s vote choice in presidential election?” and then turn it over to the groups. After an around 10-minute group discussion that is based on the assigned readings (and I myself would often join one or two groups), each group would choose a “spokesperson” who would share his/her group’s thoughts with the whole class. And I also encourage them to rotate the “spokesperson” for different questions. Meanwhile, I keep track of commonalities and differences between the answers offered by the groups and write down important points on the board.

I even extend the facilitator role outside of the class. I keep myself as approachable as possible. I reply student’s emails quickly (never respond students’ email on the next day). Particularly, I have a 15-minute rule. Since many contents I teach are methods and programming related, I encourage my students to figure out the problems by themselves first, but I also tell them “once you’ve spent 15 minutes attempting to troubleshoot a problem, you must ask for help.” I usually respond their questions timely and assist them to figure out the problems with several emails back and forth (because most of the time I refuse to give a direct answer, instead I provide a hint).

Be Structured

This principle is not only about having an organized syllabus, but also about each individual class structure. First, I design that the course begins with an overarching question and goes with a coherent structure. For example, in *Social Science Inquiry II*, we start with the readings of an introductory article “The American Voter” from the *Oxford Handbook of American Elections*, and several empirical papers that separately discuss the determining factors of individual vote choice in American presidential elections (eg. partisanship, issue voting, condition of economy). Then, week by week, I introduce the quantitative tools necessary for answering this overarching question (eg. from conceptualization to sampling, from correlation to regression). And each weekly homework is aimed to solidify the tools learned in that week and is designed to coherently snowball the toolkits for a whole empirical analysis. By the end of the term, students are hopefully well prepared and able to individually conduct an empirical analysis in the final paper. In the very last class, I assign and discuss the most recent papers on the vote choice theory, before concluding the course with a road map of academics in political science (such as the future courses to take and the most heatedly discussed topics).

Second, the class pace throughout the term should be structured and the learning process within a week should be coherent. I prefer to organize the class on a weekly basis. In each week, class sessions

will be one of the three types: Discussion (where I guide the class – divided into small groups – through a conceptual discussion about that week’s topic); Demonstration (where I use R to perform a task related to that week’s topic); Lab (where I guide the students by using R to perform a task related to that weeks’ topic).

Third, each class itself must be structured and organized. I normally begin a class with an overview of the previous class and a reminder of the class overall picture (a secondary reason is that it gives the students a couple of minutes to focus their minds away from what they were doing prior to my class and turn their attention to me and the class material). I also wrap up each class session by a brief concluding remark, and upload the class material online on the same day for students to review.

Be Focused and Be Passionate

I believe that during a learning process, attitudes matter! So I stress being focused and being passionate. With respect to being focused, I am upfront with students at very first class by introducing myself: “Frankly speaking, my job, as a PhD candidate, is first and foremost to do research, publish, and get a job.” But then I say, “However, now I am here, and it’s my current job to be focused on you. I have to forget what I was just working on, forget my recent rejection of my paper in a journal; and focus on you. So I’d ask you to do the same – Be Focused! Do the reading before the class, join the class discussion, do homework carefully and submit it on time.”

Once focused, it is my goal to bring energy to the classroom (if this requires drinking coffee throughout class, so be it). In the seminar room, I do not stand behind the podium, rather, I move around the room (especially during the lab session) or even sit on the edge of table (when we discuss contents). I frequently use the question-and-answer format during my speech, making it easy for students to follow. I sometimes emphasize an important concept by repeating three times, and use metaphors and puns at the proper moments. I also go to classroom wearing a sports coat, because I am enthusiastic about the contents that I am teaching so I want to present them properly and elegantly.

TEACHING PLANS

I am delighted to teach both American Politics and Political Methodology. On the substantive side of my teaching plans, I’d be happy to teach *Introduction to American Politics* and *The American Presidency*, either in a large lecture, in a small seminar, or even online. On the methods side, I am capable in teaching any class in the quantitative sequence, including *Math Camp*, *Linear Models*, *Causal Inference*, *Maximum Likelihood*, and *Machine Learning & Text as Data*. I can also teach programming based course, such as *Applied Computational Social Sciences*. Finally, I am more than happy to teach undergraduate core classes, like the class I exemplified above, that combines the social science research philosophy and research methods.