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Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Throughout my education, I was deeply motivated to discover the best path forward for society, using social science and the humanities to explore what political goals are worth pursuing and the best means for obtaining them. As political science professor, I promote interest in politics and provide students with analytical tools to understand the political world. By the end of my courses, students are able to interpret political events and institutions through multiple perspectives, and offer novel interpretations building on class discussions.

Three tenets guide my teaching philosophy. First, I connect classroom content to current events and student experience. Second, I employ a diversity of teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles. Third, I respect the diversity of thought and experiences of my students. By following these tenets, I maintain student interest and create a space where they explore and revise ideas in introductory courses, upper level courses, and small seminars.

Successful teaching begins with student motivation. By using current events as starting points, students see why the research political scientists conduct is relevant to them. Politics leads to public policies that affect real people - both the students and those around them. The recent controversy over immigration and sanctuary cities, for example, helps students understand the relevance of political science scholarship on nationalism, constitutional law, and federalism. Likewise, Trump's unlikely nomination and allegation of "fake news" are entry points into discussions about the nature of parties, framing, and voter information processing. In other words, I teach students that controversies in political science help them to understand more familiar controversies in politics.

Having taught a wide diversity of students, including adult learners, first generation college students, and urban high school students, I recognize the need to vary instruction with student needs and learning styles. At the start of the course, I diagnose what students already know and meet with students who may need additional background information. My syllabi avoid relying too much on a single class activity or measurement of performance. Many students learn from comparison and contrast, and benefit from assigned debates. Others prefer less structured class discussion or hands-on activities. In a course on elections in 2016, I divided students into four Senate campaigns, with a different student in each group role-playing the candidate, campaign manager, or press secretary. Students had to stage a campaign kick-off event, press conference, and a debate, while also filming a campaign commercial. In a course on the media, students wrote four blog posts using Tableau software to provide hands on experience with the new media and the presentation of data.

For all students, class participation is vital to practicing critical thinking and applying what they learn to contemporary issues and cases. Promoting discussion begins by encouraging active reading. Once this base is constructed, students are invited to respond to each others' comments during class, and exposed to a diversity of viewpoints before moving to new topics. I involve otherwise reticent students to participate by using a "present and prepared" system, in which students sign a sheet at the beginning of class permitting me to call upon

them randomly to reply to other students or answer questions about the readings. Students are not required to sign, but earn extra credit for doing so. For students uncomfortable participating verbally in class, I provide alternate means of participation evaluation.

Class participation is also an opportunity to provide feedback before formal grading, by encouraging students to think aloud in a non-threatening atmosphere. I invite students to visit my office, offer feedback, attend guest speaker events, and participate in online bulletin boards. As they work on their exam and paper assignments, they learn to explain why they support one position over another, treating opposing positions as sympathetically as possible. I teach students that it is important to offer and welcome mature and respectful feedback, because students who disagree are more likely to hold their arguments to a rigorous standard. In an environment that values debate and open feedback, students can approach current politics as deliberative participants, understanding the source of disagreement and what the best evidence scholarship has to say to diverse viewpoints.

To help students perform their best, I let them know what resources are available in and out of the classroom, and how they will be evaluated. I comment on paper proposals and rough drafts to clarify what I look for in written assignments. In political science papers, a writing assignment's thesis, organization, and conclusion should be explored gradually as students learn more about a general topic. Students begin with a general topic, gather relevant arguments and compare them to their initial beliefs, and finally formulate a thesis that reflects what they have found. The structure, sources, and other elements of the paper should be determined after this process, to fit the needs of a particular thesis. While students often begin research with a particular conclusion in mind, I encourage them to view writing as a tool for exploring different outcomes to their questions, whether normative or empirical. Writing facilitates an internal dialog in which students reexamine their prior beliefs in light of new arguments and new evidence.

Although academic employers often require separate research and teaching philosophy statements, research and teaching have a symbiotic relationship. Research calls student attention to the creative, dynamic element of the discipline and reminds them that political science is not a static body of knowledge that remains constant from one textbook edition to the next. My own research has shown students at several schools what political scientists do apart from teaching. In the spring of 2013, I taught a seminar on "Gender, Sexuality, and the American Party System" at Wellesley College. I brought my seminar students to Radcliffe College to read documents from the newly-opened National Women's Political Caucus archives. At the College of the Holy Cross, I oversaw students in my "Urban Politics" course as they worked for local nonprofits and developed group projects based on their experience.

My broad teaching experience, research background, and methodological training have equipped me to teach a variety of classes. While I learned to integrate knowledge across a wide variety of subjects at liberal arts colleges, I also developed a diverse set of tools teaching at high schools, community colleges, and research universities. I am committed to advancing active learning in political science regardless of student level or background. When college courses are taught correctly, students will broaden their horizons with new perspectives in political science and new analytical tools to apply to current politics.