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Teaching Statement

My goal as an instructor is to provide students with positive theoretical frameworks and analytical tools which can be applied to politics. This involves looking for empirical patterns to support or contradict theory, applying a critical lens to current events, and presenting argument and supporting evidence in a clear, convincing manner. Therefore, I place a strong emphasis on linking academic thought to policymaking, and encourage dialogue about the complementarities (and disjunctions) between academia and the policymaking community. At the end of my courses, students should have the ability to interpret political developments in a rigorous manner, possess enough empirical knowledge to know whether events are typical or anomalous, and the capacity to both describe and explain phenomena in world politics.

Whenever possible, I approach instruction using a “challenge and support” developmental model. That is, I try to create an environment where students’ prior beliefs and attitudes about politics are tested by exposing them to new perspectives. In particular, rather than focusing solely on stylized facts or historical developments, I try to encourage students to think about the world using social science tools. I encourage discussion and respectful debate, so that students can learn from each other as well as me, eventually forming views through a process of critical reasoning that perpetually incorporates new arguments and evidence.

To demonstrate how the course is relevant to the students’ own lives and interests, I prioritize discussion of ongoing and recent developments in politics in every class session, taking care to link recent news to theories and concepts from the course. I encourage students to bring their own questions and comments about topics relevant to their academic or professional goals to discuss with the class. I have found that this is a good way to build rapport with students, and it tends to foster interest – and occasionally even excitement – in the academic topics covered in the class. Additionally, I try to take advantage of technological developments to enrich the classroom experience through the use of videos, blogs, social media, and research aids.

In my classes I emphasize the distributional nature of politics, discussing both positive theoretical explanations of political activity, and the normative ramifications of the actions. For example, when we discuss international bargaining over climate change policy, I emphasize the fact that some states are much more vulnerable to climate change

than others, and that some states have more to lose by reducing emissions than others. We discuss the free-rider problem, and the difficulties in creating a meaningful, self-enforcing regulatory regime to capture any joint gains that may exist. But we also discuss differential levels of development across countries, and consider whether it is ethically satisfying for all countries to limit pollution if that requires less developed countries to slow improvements in standards of living.

Even at lower undergraduate levels, I believe it is very important to teach students what academics and policymakers think and do. As part of my courses, I hope to instill a sense of what the "science" in "social science" means, and how policy comes into being. It is important to me that my course material is rigorous, but is presented in an approachable manner. As a result, I routinely assign articles from academic and policy journals as well as general interest sources. I believe lectures are best used to dispassionately present core topics, definitions, and basic empirical evidence, while readings challenge ideological predispositions in a way that can lead to productive dialogue. This organization is designed to foster critical thinking, provide an introduction to the process of social science, and pass on a theoretical framework and capacity for analysis that will be useful in other classes, occupations, and activities.

I place a strong emphasis on students' ability to communicate ideas clearly and effectively, both verbally and on the page. In my classes, I stress the need for discussion to be constructive and focused on analysis and respectful debate rather than merely taking turns giving personal views. I encourage precise writing, and knowing the differences (and commonalities) between an argumentative essay and a research paper. I provide clear instructions to my students of what would constitute a good response to each prompt, offer examples of well-written papers, and provide lots of feedback.

I have a variety of teaching interests. At the undergraduate level I would enjoy teaching introductory courses both in international relations generally and in international political economy specifically. Aside from introductory courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels, I would be well-suited to teach courses on international organizations and global governance, the comparative and international politics of finance and financial development, the politics of crisis and reform, the history of thought in political economy, and a variety of methodology courses including linear regression, time series analysis, maximum likelihood estimation of generalized linear models, social network analysis, Bayesian methodologies, and research design.

I have been involved in teaching in every semester during graduate school. I have five times been a Teaching Assistant leading recitation sections for Introduction to International Relations (under Thomas Oatley, Layna Mosley, and Mark Crescenzi), which covers security studies, international political economy, and other topics in international politics such as human rights and environmental politics. Twice I have been a Teaching Assistant for Introduction to American Politics (under Pamela Conover and George Rabinowitz). The past two semesters (including Fall 2012) I have been a Teaching Fellow for Introduction to International Relations, for which I will run all aspects of an undergraduate course with 30-45 students. I have given guest lectures to large lecture

classes (270+ students) on several occasions. My student evaluations, some of which are included in this packet, are generally well above the mean and median scores of my peers. Comments from students from the recently completed semesters (as Teaching Fellow and Teaching Assistant) include:

The organization, pace, and instructional methods all worked well to integrate current events and theoretical content. The assignments were not rote exercises but deliberately intended to connect multiple themes.

Very knowledgeable and passionate instructor. The class progressed logically through the topics covered.

Will was by far the best recitation leader I've had at Carolina. He not only explained the material thoroughly, but he applied it to current events that made it especially interesting. Also, I thought the balance of him speaking and letting us speak in the class was very good, and the overall atmosphere that he provided made me feel comfortable to analyze others' opinions as well as speak my own.

I was entirely impressed by your teaching. Everything that was unclear in lecture you made clear for us. We were able to have discussion while still maintaining focus on the topics in the course and facilitating [*sic*] successful learning. I wish you the best of luck with your class next semester.

I gained much more knowledge from the recitation than from the actual class. I was challenged to interpret the material more in recitation which led to me understanding the material better. I appreciate that everything covered in recitation was applicable to the course and deepened my knowledge of the material. Also, I am appreciative that my TA was consistently prepared and clearly understood both this material and information beyond the course.