Writing a Winning Teaching Statement

According to an October 11, 2005, search on HigherEdJobs.com, of the 1,000 ads for faculty jobs:

- 585 include the words "teaching philosophy,"
- 27 include the words "teaching statement," and
- 28 include the words "teaching portfolio."

When you apply for a job or come up for tenure, you will be asked to submit a teaching statement. Of course in some instances, a teaching statement is not a serious factor in the hiring or the tenure process. An institution requires a statement simply to send the message that it regards teaching as important. And it is no doubt the case that a poor teaching statement can hurt more than a strong statement can help. A bad statement clearly identifies a grad student who is disdainful of students and who dislikes teaching.

But in other cases, especially at liberal arts colleges, a memorable, skillfully written teaching statement helps to set you apart from other candidates. It can demonstrate that you have reflected seriously about your learning objectives, methods, and the relationship between your research and your teaching.

Do's and Don'ts

Many teaching statements are insipid, vague, grandiose, or mired in generalities.

Don'ts:

1. ***Don't simply rehash your c.v.***
   Instead, demonstrate that you are well prepared to "hit the ground running" at a particular institution.

2. ***Don't pontificate***
   Don't let the word "philosophy" lead you to adopt a dry or pedantic or airy style. Avoid empty, excessively abstract philosophical generalizations.

3. ***Don't be generic***
   Tailor your teaching statement to the institution. Demonstrate that you understand what a particular department expects of you. A "bulk mail" approach to a job search is a recipe for failure.

4. ***Don't plagiarize***
   Make sure your statement is unique to you.

Do's:

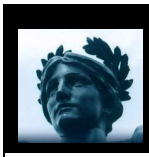
1. ***Ground your statement in your discipline.***

2. ***Be humble***
   Avoid hyperbole and excessive superlatives.

3. ***Consider this an opportunity to sell yourself.***

4. ***Connect your teaching and your research.***

5. ***Remember, your statement is a writing sample.***



Columbia University
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences *Teaching Center*

Advancing teaching and learning

The Teaching Center is the go-to place for practical advice about teaching. We can help you:

- Successfully market your teaching
- Deal with anxiety, challenges to your authority, and other classroom issues
- Design innovative courses, deliver scintillating, substantive lectures, and lead stimulating discussions and labs.
- Respond appropriately to shy, withdrawn, or disruptive students.
- Use technology more effectively.

***The Teaching Center* offers:**

- Weekly workshops
- Individual consultations
- Certification in pedagogy
- Observations on your teaching
- A library of teaching, job search, and publishing resources

A catalyst for innovation, *The Teaching Center*

- Promotes interdisciplinary
- Sponsors research in the science of learning
- Supports improvements in the assessment of learning outcomes
- Works collaboratively to improve public education through community and school partnerships

To arrange a one-on-one consultation, contact:

Steven Mintz
smintz@columbia.edu
212-854-1066

How to Write an Effective Teaching Statement

1. Identify your learning objectives

What are the most important skills and habits of mind that you want students to learn in your classes? These might include:

Developing students' problem solving strategies
Insuring that students understand foundational concepts
Modeling expert problem solving
Teaching students to work collaboratively
Reduce math or science anxiety

2. Explain—with concrete, specific examples—how you accomplish these goals.

A teaching statement offers a chance to discuss the exciting, innovative, and effective things you do in the classroom. Make sure you identify the most successful assignments and activities you have used in your classes. Explain:

- How do you interest and engage students.
- How do you help students understand difficult ideas and concepts.
- How do you assess student learning.

3. Identify, again with examples, challenges you have faced in the classroom and how you addressed them.

You need to demonstrate that you have meaningful classroom experience and are well prepared for a full teaching load.

4. Integrate strong, supportive statements from student course evaluations.

5. Explain how your research contributes to your teaching.

6. Describe the courses you'd like to teach.

7. Keep it short and succinct

In a job application, a teaching statement should be no more than 1-2 pages long.

Reflecting on Student Learning

In recent years, we have learned a great deal about how students learn and what pedagogical techniques work most effectively. Here are some of the findings:

1. Learning is a developmental process: Students must develop a capacity for self-direction, self-monitoring, and self-generation of ideas. In addition, students must learn how to formulate questions, conduct research, and write in a professional manner.

In order to mature as a learner, a student must shed earlier identities, ways of thinking, and forms of self-expression. The process of intellectual maturation is often emotionally wrenching, for it doesn't simply involve rejecting long held beliefs, it involves fundamental transformations in one's self-perception, thinking, and behavior and modes of relating to others.

2. Conceptual learning: Advanced learning requires students to construct a conceptual framework which allows them to integrate and organize new knowledge and information into a coherent structure. If students are going to construct a conceptual framework, it is important to give them opportunities to reflect and revisit important ideas repeatedly throughout a semester.

3. Learning has an affective dimension: Engagement is a key component of learning. Without engagement there is little motivation to learn. We need hooks to stimulate student curiosity and interest.

4. Students learn best when they are engaged in active inquiry: Students learn most when they have opportunities to undertake tasks similar to those undertaken by professionals within a discipline.

5. Students need to critically engage primary sources: Students need opportunities to work on authentic problems using authentic kinds of evidence.

6. Experiential learning: This means learning by doing. Project-based learning gives students the chance to do original work. It might mean researching and writing a research paper, or undertaking an experiment or making a video.

7. Collaborative inquiry: One way to deepen students' understanding is to develop collaborative projects that give each student a clear role and set of responsibilities.

8. The importance of dialogue: Despite appearances, learning is a social, not a solitary, activity. While many of us have had unhappy experiences with small group learning, we need to envision ways that students can contribute to one another's intellectual growth through a process of intellectual give and take.

9. Students do not learn in a single way: To reach a wide range of learners, it is important to combine a variety of approaches, including demonstrations, simulations, lecture, discussion, and collaborative activities.

10. Reaching students at their own level: The early 20th century developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky wrote about the "zone of proximal development," an awkward phrase that refers to that level of understanding that a student can reach with a teacher's help. Thus, an instructor seeks to stretch and broaden a student's understanding by identifying those areas that are within the student's grasp—not too easy, but also not too difficult.

11. Classroom climate: Student learning can be enhanced or hindered by the classroom environment. A safe and stimulating environment encourages students to actively participate. Fostering such an environment requires instructors to be sensitive to individual differences and to make sure that students understand their expectations and goals and the steps they need to take to meet those objectives.

Sample Teaching Statements:

BIOLOGY:

I believe as a biologist and a teacher it is my responsibility to challenge and support my students, in pursuit of three learning goals: (1) confront misconceptions about crucial biological ideas; (2) learn basic biological concepts; (3) cultivate an interest in science and an understanding of how we do science. For the majority of my non-science major students, the semester spent in my classroom will be their first and last experience doing science. Yet, these students will have to make decisions about biological issues. I want my students to leave my classroom with basic biological skills that enable them to engage these ideas, making well-considered choices. How do I do this? I start with a complex, yet relevant, idea such as whether forests could be used as carbon sinks to counter global climate change. I gather students' initial ideas about why plants need carbon and where they acquire that carbon. I then challenge them to discuss the questions in pairs and explain their answers to one another. A second poll of answers demonstrates how students' ideas have changed, and allows me to correct misconceptions and assess their understanding of basic biological concepts. The crucial final stage in this discussion is that of developing experiments to test their ideas. This is the crux of how science is done.

Traditionally, there has been a major discrepancy between how we do science and how we teach science. In most biology lab classes, students carry out lab activities by following step by step directions printed in the lab manual. Students do not experience the joy of discovery since every step of the experiment, including expected results, is explicitly stated, requiring little creative thought. In my lab classroom, we use an inquiry-based lab curriculum, centering on the principle that students should actually do science themselves. Doing science entails defining a biological problem or question, addressing the problem through experimentation, and interpreting the findings. An inquiry-based curriculum offers many opportunities for active learning, creating an atmosphere in which students must take responsibility for their learning. During one three-week-long segment, my students test the effectiveness of frequently prescribed antibiotics and to tackle the issue of evolution of bacterial resistance to antibiotics. Students are immediately immersed in all aspects of science; working in small groups, through intensive discussion, they collaboratively design and conduct experiments, deciding which antibiotics to test and how to best determine whether an antibiotic is effective. After carrying out their experiments, students write articles in the style of popular magazines in which they interpret their experimental results and translate these ideas into everyday language. As a result of conducting these experiments, students rethink the common misconception that it is not necessary to complete a course of prescribed antibiotics.

I have two benchmarks for determining that my objectives for students learning are met: that students are able to convey biological concepts in everyday language; and that students are able to use basic knowledge and skills as building blocks to tackle more complex problems. Often this requires that I use more unusual means of evaluation to determine whether these learning objectives are met. For example, after a series of labs in which students use molecular biology techniques to investigate genetic diseases, students use role play, pretending to be genetic counselors. My students leave the lab classroom with the ability to discuss and develop ideas to address problems in

collaboration with their peers, which is the underlying structure of the process of scientific inquiry. More importantly, though this may be the final biology course which my students experience, developing the ability to collaborate and persevering to see projects to completion are skills which are transferable to many aspects of my students' lives.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES:

There are a wide variety of approaches to foreign language instruction. These include the Total Physical Response method in which students engage in activities that include singing and acting in plays as they learn Spanish language skills; the Communicative Approach stressing communicative competence; the Grammar-Translation Method, which emphasizes translation of passages and memorization of grammatical rules; and the Audio-Lingual Method emphasizing repetition. My teaching draws up a variety of approaches….

HISTORY:

As a teacher of history, I have three major learning goals: To instill the ability to think historically - to appreciate the importance of change over time, contingency, and the importance of context; to give students opportunities to do history - to undertake research, weigh evidence, and interpret primary sources; and to provide students with chances to tell history - to write research papers and make classroom presentations that address important historical questions, advance a clear argument, speak to alternate viewpoints, and present compelling conclusions.

The majority of my students enter my classes knowing little about my subject. For many of these students, mine is the only course in history that they will take. Therefore, I feel a special responsibility for ensuring that the students not only emerge from my classes with a command of historical content, but with an understanding of the way that historians approach and address fundamental problems.

My teaching philosophy can be summed up in terms of four basic commitments. I believe students learn history best when they:

- Work with primary sources, the extent traces of the past.

- Discover that history is not simply a litany of names and dates but of questions and problems.

- Write frequently and learn how to communicate ideas and arguments clearly and convincingly.

- Have an instructor who is passionate and knowledgeable about history and who can illustrate abstract themes with stories and anecdotes that bring history to life.

Among the challenges that I have faced as an instructor, several stand out: engaging non-majors who are taking history because it is required; challenging students who have a deep background in a topic while not neglecting those students who are novices; and persuading students who are reticent or disengaged to actively participate in discussions. There is nothing quite as unsettling as a prolonged silence during a discussion or witnessing a vapid expression on a student's face. My answer to these challenges has involved active inquiry, problem solving, and small group activities.

To teach the importance of perspective, I juxtapose conflicting accounts of landmark events. Through close examination of these texts, my students come to understand how different backgrounds and agendas generate contrasting viewpoints.

I make frequent use of maps in my classes. Maps not only help students understand geography but allow them to see that maps are not necessary the objective depictions of reality that students sometimes mistakenly assume, and can serve ideological and political purposes.

My research informs my teaching and my teaching has helped enlighten my research. My research which cuts across the boundaries separating cultural, diplomatic, political, and social history, addresses issues that I have discovered are deeply meaningful to diverse students: migration, borders, collective identities, nationalism, imperialism, and colonial resistance - subjects that I address in my classes.

PSYCHOLOGY:

As an instructor of an introductory psychology course, the majority of my students are non-psychology major freshmen. Furthermore, for most of these students, this may be their first and perhaps the only psychology course they will take in college. With that in mind, I have three main objectives for their learning experiences: 1) to facilitate the

appreciation for the science of psychology, 2) to provide fundamental knowledge and tools applicable to students' pedagogical career, and 3) to enhance self-awareness and understanding of the world around them and the people in it.…

I believe that students do not come to class as blank slates and often bring with them preconceived notions about the field of psychology. These preconceived notions may consist of false assumptions, generalizations, and ideologies that manifest into a lack of appreciation and understanding for the science of psychology. As a teacher, a psychologist in-training, and a researcher, it is important for me to acknowledge that but to also provide students with a well-informed view of psychology. However, before I can challenge them to think differently, I must first help my students see the relevance of psychological concepts in their lives. I bring psychology to life by providing examples students can grasp based on what they know of the world. I take big theories down to possible answers to every-day life questions (i.e., why have you chosen the friends you have? why do we conform to societal norms?) to make the connection between the textbook and real life issues. Demonstrations and activities are used to help students "see, feel, and touch" what psychology is all about.

Because they are not blank slates, I invite students to utilize their life experiences when learning the course material. I involve students in activities, ask for examples from their lives, and allow time for reflection and reactions to the material. For example, to illustrate concepts of gender differences, gender roles, and societal influences, I engage my students in the "Are men really from Mars and women from Venus?" dialogue…. I bring in knowledge from research to contextualize the discussion and demonstrate how psychologists scientifically explore answers to such questions....

POLITICAL SCIENCE:

Example 1: Laura M. Luehrmann , Political Science, The Ohio State University

I am a firm believer in active learning, and I try to maintain a very lively and interactive classroom. To me, teaching is not about lecturing to students; it is about presenting theories, concepts, and empirical material to students in a way that they can integrate this information into their own life experience. I try to accomplish this not only in my presentations and lectures, but in the questions that structure classroom discussion and, particularly, in writing assignments. For example, the culmination of my Political Ideologies class is a paper in which each student must sketch his or her own political ideology, as well as how this approach compares to two major contemporary ideologies of our world. I have similar writing assignments in my other courses as well.

In each of my classes, I emphasize critical thinking and real-world applications of the concepts and issues we study. I try to engage students who sometimes fail to see the humanity of political and social situations in other countries, or, more commonly, who overlook the interconnectedness of world events with our life in the United States. For example, to teach about rural politics in China, I have constructed a role-play exercise in which the students assume the identity of rural agricultural workers, peasant entrepreneurs, and party cadres, in an attempt to portray the competing priorities and challenges of implementing policies in rapidly changing circumstances. I also begin each one of my classes with a discussion of current events which are related to our subject matter. I have found this exercise most useful in the Political Ideologies classes, when students sometimes view political "theory" as completely divorced from contemporary political "reality".

Finally, I do not see a rigid dividing line between research and teaching. Good teachers need to be at the cutting edge of recent scholarship, in order to help students see the dynamism of our work. Social science is not a collection of facts, but rather, an area of research that is still alive with puzzles, contradictions, and new areas of inquiry. I try to "demystify" research for students, by encouraging them to discover the excitement that can be found in researching the political world. I welcome the opportunity to supervise independent projects, and I have encouraged students in my own classes to submit their writing to appropriate journals for review.

Example 2: Monica Schneider, University of Minnesota

A liberal arts education should produce students who are strong critical thinkers and capable problem-solvers. Students should graduate with the skills necessary to be productive and engaged citizens. I plan to use faculty roles of teaching, research, and service to support student attainment of these goals.

In every course that I teach, each class reading, assignment, and lecture facilitates students' achievement of both broad and specific demonstrable critical thinking goals. My first goal is for students to become engaged and critical citizens. Through the use of historical and factual knowledge of American politics, participants in my class will critically evaluate the politics of today. My second goal is for students to compare and contrast different theories to explain political and social behavior. My third goal is to have students ask interesting and important theoretical questions and

consider the normative implications of those questions. In addition, I want students to have the experience of using a variety of different methods to improve their capability of answering their own valid social science questions.

I have already developed and used assignments to achieve these goals. In particular, in my course Quantitative Analysis, each student asked an interesting social scientific question of importance to that student. One of my students, "Mark," was interested in prejudice against specific minority groups and ultimately how prejudice might affect support for policies such as the "Marriage Amendment." Mark hypothesized that Minnesotans, particularly males, would be more prejudiced against male cross-dressers compared to gay or straight men. Armed with information from my lectures and assigned readings, Mark compared and contrasted various methods to test his hypotheses. Mark designed an experiment and subsequently selected and defended the sampling design and measurements for the independent and dependent variables. Thus, by doing their own research with my guidance, Mark and the students in the course had the experience of creating their own theories, testing them through the use of quantitative methods, and developing their own conclusions about the validity of these theories.

I evaluated my students' success as budding social scientists using short written assignments, a research paper, in-class group and individual activities, presentations, and a short examination. Using my feedback on their work, students were able to improve their thinking and final project. In the assessment of this assignment, conducted by gathering student comments and feedback in a survey format, I conclude that students felt more confident in their abilities as social scientists, critical thinkers, and users of quantitative techniques as one way to answer social science questions.

A second sample activity is one I plan on using in an interdisciplinary psychology and political science course on social and political identity. Students will compare and contrast individual- and societal-level explanations and solutions for prejudice and racism. For example, psychologists (e.g., Dovidio, Gaertner, and Esses) posit a "contact hypothesis" as a way to overcome racism while political science work (e.g., Oliver) examines a similar hypothesis on a macro-level. Students will extend their understanding of these theories by applying them to experiences in their own lives or to current societal examples as well as by analyzing films such as Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing. Students will sharpen their theoretical skills by considering both psychological and political explanations for particular behaviors and behavioral outcomes. The ability to think beyond one discipline is consistent with the broad goals of a liberal arts education and will prepare students for Capstone Projects or Senior Theses.

A final sample course component that would achieve my teaching goals would be to have students evaluate the relevant theory explaining participation in a democracy. Students will write an opinion piece defending their views on mandatory voter laws, comparing the U.S. to other countries. Next, assigned readings will posit theories of the causes of individual variation in participation and my lectures will clarify important concepts in these readings, particularly how scholars define participation, theorize on the causes of participation, and test their theories.

To engage actively in political science theory and practice, students in my course will design, implement, and justify their own plans for increasing voter turnout. Through practical implementation, students will deepen their understanding of the theory. Students will be assessed on their ability to evaluate critically democratic theory and political science research. As an active scholar who is involved in many different projects, I seek to engage students as assistants in my own research. As an undergraduate, I learned about social science by helping a psychology professor with her research. By assisting her with theory development, literature reviews, experimental design, and analysis, I became a better researcher. As I pursue my research agenda addressing representation with solid theory and methods, I plan to invite undergraduates to participate in all aspects of the research process – from conception to completion - including asking sound questions grounded in theory and extant literature, research methods and design, analysis, and writing.

Over the course of my graduate career, I have actively sought to broaden my repertoire of teaching techniques. I have given numerous guest lectures relating my research to undergraduate students. I have also attended and organized a number of political science-specific teaching seminars on using elections and technology in the classroom, teaching with writing, discussion, film, service learning, and commenting on student writing. Most importantly, I have completed an elective two semester sequence entitled Preparing Future Faculty. In these courses, I evaluated a variety of different teaching techniques and wrote an interdisciplinary syllabus. I lectured for an introductory American Politics course under the supervision of Joseph Peschek, a senior faculty member at Hamline University, an undergraduate-focused institution located in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Example 3: Christopher N. Lawrence, Tulane University

My Approach to Teaching: My primary objective as teacher of political science is to enable my students to think logically and clearly about political questions. In many ways, this objective overlaps with one of the key questions embodied in my research program—the question of whether, and to what extent, the public is equipped to comprehend and apply new political information in their decision-making processes. I think it is more important for students to emerge from an introductory course with a clear understanding of how politics works than a battery of factual knowledge, much of which may not be applicable when they encounter future political science courses or are called on to think about political questions later in life. That is not to say that factual knowledge is unimportant; some degree of information is needed for any political reasoning. However, knowledge is easier to acquire when it is needed than the ability to make reasoned judgments.

Coupled with this objective, particularly in more advanced courses, is my interest in encouraging students to better understand the study of politics can be approached using scientific processes. Students are often under the impression that "science" is something that one can only do with a Bunsen burner and a lab coat, but scientific approaches can also lead to worthwhile knowledge in social inquiry. Whether students are applying quantitative or qualitative methods, the scientific method—developing a strong theory, testable hypotheses, and an appropriate research and case-selection strategy—should be applied rigorously. While not all political questions lend themselves to scientific inquiry, when students are called on to do research on empirical questions they should be equipped to apply the appropriate research method for their question with rigor. This approach is at the core of my teaching of political science research methods for undergraduates.

The key approach I use in my teaching to accomplish these objectives is to engage students in them. One way I find to be effective is to sell the material with an enthusiastic approach. The courses I have taught in the past have generally been required courses, not electives, which often leads students to be less excited about the material than they might otherwise be; this attitude is particularly common among students in the research methods course. Engaging students with real-world examples, an abundance of enthusiasm, and a healthy dose of humor seems to help most students over their initial lack of interest in the material. Particularly in the methods course, I've found that the use of texts that cover the material in an accessible way is effective at disarming students.

I also have carried forward my experience at Millsaps College, a small liberal arts institution focused on undergraduate teaching, to my subsequent positions at large research universities. I firmly believe in an "open door" policy, whereby students are free to drop in regardless of whether or not they arrive during posted office hours, and in being accessible to students in and outside the classroom. From this experience I have also decided that it is important to me to teach in a context where colleagues and the administration also place a high value on faculty teaching meaningful, rigorous courses, even if this leaves less time for faculty to conduct research.

Perhaps most important, though, in the methods course is ensuring that students recognize the connection between the statistical methods I am teaching and the substantive problems they are trying to understand through their own research and readings in other courses. Students who may be initially reluctant to "do math" often find it much more rewarding when they come to understand that it allows them to analyze the real world in a more rigorous fashion. In upper-division courses, I tend to emphasize the continued development of critical thinking and writing skills. In all of my upper-division courses, the bulk of student assessment is based on out-of-class essay assignments (research papers of varying lengths and take-home essay exams), coupled with assigned readings from textbooks, scholarly books, and research articles that cover the major themes of the course in significant depth. I mostly devote class time to occasional lectures on the more difficult concepts raised in the readings, with the bulk of time spent on seminar discussion of the broader conclusions of the readings and connections between the theoretical and practical realms of politics.

I have also begun to integrate instructional technology in my courses. At Duke and SLU, I made use of university computer labs to include hands-on data analysis instruction and exercises in my methods course. I also had students in my American Political System course at Duke produce on-line state politics journals, which have the dual purpose of keeping students engaged in real world events beyond the classroom and an exercise in improving their writing and critical thinking skills. In my American Government courses at SLU, I used the university's WebCT system to administer online quizzes on the readings that students are expected to complete prior to coming to class, which has helped encourage students to read the course materials. Generally, students have been receptive to these approaches, and I hope to make further use of them in the future.

Overall, I find teaching political science to be a very rewarding experience; I often learn things from my students that enhance my understanding of politics or the world at large that I might not otherwise encounter. The central reward of teaching to me, however, is that it is an opportunity for me to both honor and pass forward to others the contributions

that a large number of teachers and professors have made, and continue to make, to my life. My hope is that I can make similar contributions to my students' lives and thus encourage them in the pursuit of lifelong learning.

Finally, I should mention that I am open to a variety of approaches and perspectives when teaching courses, despite my orientation towards quantitative approaches in my research. While some of the upper division courses I teach do require students to apply quantitative methods—for example, it would be difficult to understand or conduct meaningful research into public opinion or voting behavior without the use of statistical methods—many of them do not. In particular, the course in Southern politics I developed at Duke and am currently teaching at Tulane, based on a directed study course I taught at Millsaps, relies heavily on qualitative research and historical narrative.

I strongly support the notion that, while quantitative methods have an important place in the study of politics, there are other, equally-valid approaches that may be more appropriate for certain problems or may be able to explore questions that quantitative methods are unable to answer. Perhaps equally importantly, I enjoy teaching a wide variety of courses within the fields of American political institutions and political behavior and look forward to developing and teaching new courses in the future.

Strengths and Weaknesses in the Classroom and Among Colleagues: The most basic challenge I face as a classroom teacher is that I am by nature a very shy person—the experience of lecturing in front of a group of people, or even interacting with individuals that I don't know very well, is quite uncomfortable for me. While I have worked very hard to overcome this anxiety, I have occasionally been told by observers who are unfamiliar with my teaching that my shyness and related mannerisms sometimes leave an initial impression of disinterest or aloofness. I think that my classroom evaluations show that over the course of a given semester students warm up to me, and my former chairs would say that I was a good colleague in their department.

In general, my evaluations as an instructor have been positive, particularly in the methods course. Students have uniformly noted my enthusiasm for and command of the material. However, in lecture courses I have occasionally received criticism for sometimes being difficult to hear or understand, and in the first semester I taught (Fall 2000) some students believed I rushed through the material. I have worked diligently to address these deficiencies, and both my student evaluations and informal feedback from students and fellow faculty have improved markedly as a result.

Example 4: Kessel, Alisa, Wake Forest University

I maintain a strong commitment to teaching, in part because I love to teach and in part because I believe that political science education can help students grow into informed and active citizens. I employ a democratic pedagogy that aims to prepare citizens for an active democratic life and to educate them about the most important issues of our time. As a professor of political theory, my goal is to allow both contemporary and ancient texts of political theory to speak to political problems in the world today. This is as important to me in the courses I teach as it is in my scholarly work. And just as my scholarship focuses on agency and membership in democratic polities, so my instructional work aims to nurture students' own senses of political agency. As a professor of political science, I have two overarching goals. First, I aim to complicate, rather than simplify, political discourses. In an environment of political pundits—from "the right" and "the left"—who want to demonize, insult, or otherwise discredit the arguments of the "other side," I think it is especially important to challenge this kind of political discourse by offering arguments from all perspectives that are thoughtful and generous to other citizens.

Perhaps as an inevitable result of the two-party system in the U.S, students here are often inclined to view only two sides to any political question. This over-simplification distorts the difficult choices implicit in democratic political action. My goal in constructing a syllabus, giving a lecture, or facilitating a discussion, is to expand students' understanding of an issue and the myriad interests, ideas, and insights that underlie it. My second goal is to nurture students' critical abilities to evaluate source material. Given the movement of increased "democratization" of information on the Internet (about which I am be deeply ambivalent), this goal is deeply intertwined with the first goal. I have come to realize that students have a wealth of information at their fingertips, but many of them do not yet have the capacity to evaluate what they find. I am currently re-fashioning of my courses so that I can devote significant time and energy to teaching my students how to identify reliable sources, assess author qualifications, and undertake well-rounded research on a topic.

Teaching and learning: Socrates showed us that teaching is sometimes provocation. When students are bored, tired, or otherwise uninterested, it is up to the teacher to stoke the fire. Teaching is its most difficult under these circumstances, when the teacher must animate an uninspired class. But many times, students provoke and interest one another; in those instances, the teacher is well-served to sit back and let students teach one another. Although it is not the task of the

instructor to entertain, sometimes being entertaining is the best way to challenge, inform, and facilitate. And while I believe that students ought to feel a sense of responsibility for their own learning, I also know that my enthusiasm can fuel theirs. Moreover, because the classroom is an ever-changing space with new students, topics, and challenges, a good teacher must be flexible. I strive to be responsive to the changing classroom dynamic and to students' particular learning needs. I know that I will never teach the same class twice, and I will always expect that what works for me one semester may not work the next. This dynamism is at once exciting and intimidating.

"Learning" is often measured by the amount of information a student has absorbed. I think this is an easy but uninspired vision of learning. Learning, in an exciting sense, really happens when factual knowledge is accompanied by the ability to apply knowledge, to synthesize, to make predictions and judgments, and ultimately, to make defensible normative claims. To do this, I may occasionally and intentionally create a learning environment that is uncomfortable for students because it is so unfamiliar to them. I think that students often learn best and most in moments when they are pushed to think beyond what they know (or think they know). This is especially true when learning about politics, in which the goal is to allow students to develop principled stands of their own. I also believe that in teaching, as in life, one cannot afford to fear failure. Instead, I strive to remain open to learning from my successes and failures in the classroom and to learning something important about myself, about politics, or about the world every time I step into a classroom.

Beyond the development of political positions, students can also practice democratic skills so that they can learn to take responsibility for decisions they make and for decisions made on their behalf. In my mind, political science education is not simply education about politics, but education to do politics. Students must learn, for example, to take the political positions of others (whether those "others" are ancient philosophers or college sophomores) seriously. I try to lead discussions so that students can experience what it means to respect and be respected in lively political deliberation. I hold myself accountable to these same standards of respectfulness in the classroom. Respecting the opinions of my students, and often critically challenging them, is an important way to help them nurture a sense of their own power and importance.

Courses: In undergraduate education, I enjoy developing courses that are thematic. For example, my course called "Multiculturalism and Political Theory" explored a broad range of perspectives on the challenge of multiculturalism to a political community. I also tend to be interested in topics relating to marginalized voices (because of racial or ethnic identity, cultural or religious commitments, class, or gender). In particular, I am prepared to teach undergraduate courses on democratic political theory, multiculturalism and race, the ancient Greeks, and American political thought. I will develop and teach the introductory political theory course at Wake Forest in the spring. I would also enjoy teaching a course about theories of citizenship and the challenges of migration or courses on essentially contested concepts in political theory (such as liberty or authority).

In graduate education, I adopt a different approach. My goal, in this instance, is to provide future scholars with a solid and nuanced understanding of the core issues that motivate various strands of political theory. I could ably teach democratic political theory, liberal political theory, or a seminar on early modern and modern political theory.

In conclusion, learning and teaching are essential and invigorating aspects of my intellectual life. The college atmosphere allows me to continue to grow, personally and intellectually, because I am challenged by colleagues, students, and other members of the community who present and defend their ideas in the college setting. This vitality—a deliberative and provocative vitality—is what drew me to a career as a professor, and it is what will continue to challenge me, both as an instructor and a scholar, in the future.

STATISTICS:

Statistics, as a discipline, is concerned with transforming "data" into "information." Thus, a statistical education that explains both how to learn from data and how to make inferences from data has an important place in a well-rounded education. My objectives as a statistics educator are: (1) to teach students about statistical tools and how to use them correctly, (2) to expose students to the complete cycle of statistical analysis, and (3) to teach students how to communicate statistical results and ideas clearly to a variety of audiences. These objectives apply to all the courses I teach, with varying degrees of emphasis depending on the level of the course.

My teaching philosophy can be summarized by the following beliefs:

- Students learn statistical theory best when they see how this material can be applied in real life situations.

▪ Students must be able to see past the computational drudgery to the underlying principles. Both oral and written skills in presenting results are important.
▪ Students need to see instructors who are passionate about their field.
▪ Instructors improve their teaching from regular feedback from the students and other instructors. Experimentation and Quality Improvement should be a regular tool of an instructors life.

These beliefs have several implications for the way in which I teach courses and interact with students:
▪ Real Life Examples: Many of the assignments in my courses involve an actual experiment or are related to current events. For example, when anecdotal complaints were raised about the prices of textbooks at the SFU Bookstore, I encourage students in a course to do an actual investigation. This subsequently lead to a publication of their experiences.

▪ Using computer packages: Students in introductory or service courses in statistics should use a computer package (e.g. JMP) to analyze realistic problems. This frees the students from worrying about the computational drudgery often associated with Statistics and allows them to concentrate on the concepts.

▪ Oral and written skills: My assignments always include written questions where students must explain their results. Upper level students must complete term papers - unusual in the mathematical sciences as much of the material in these programs is extremely technical. Graduate students are strongly encouraged to make oral presentations about their work.