

Gov 3002: Teaching and Communicating Political Science
Department of Government, Harvard University
Fall 2024

Teaching staff:

Faculty advisor: Joshua Kertzer (jkertzer@gov.harvard.edu)
Instructor: Reed Rasband (rasband@g.harvard.edu)
Office hours: By appointment

Class meetings:

All classes will be held in-person on Tuesdays from 3-5pm ET, except for the introductory session which will be held from 1:00-3:30pm ET on Friday, August 30.

Date	Topic
8/30/24	An introduction to teaching at Harvard
9/3/24	The fundamentals of effective instruction
9/10/24	Discussions and practice opportunities: The basics
9/17/24	Developing and grading assignments effectively
9/24/24	Creating an inclusive classroom
10/1/24	Teaching skills: Reading, writing, math, coding
10/8/24	Navigating challenging dynamics in the classroom

Goals:

The goal of this course is to help you become a purposeful, effective, and efficient teacher. Developing the skills to clearly communicate knowledge, expectations, and ways of thinking to students not only benefits them, but also benefits you—by making it easier to balance teaching and research and by growing your ability to communicate political science. This is a required course (graded SAT/UNSAT) for Government Ph.D. students who are teaching in the department for the first time (typically G3s). Between meetings, you will have the chance to apply what you learn through peer observation and watching a recording of your section with Reed.

Course expectations:

Students earning a SAT in Gov 3002 will meet the following expectations:

- Attend *orientation and all six required sessions*.
- Observe and debrief one section with your assigned fellow graduate student by **November 22, 2024**. Upload a brief reflection to Canvas by **November 26, 2024**.
- Schedule a section video observation at this [link](#) and then meet with Reed to watch it together. The observation and debrief meeting must be completed by **November 8, 2024**.

Session overviews

Friday, August 30th: An introduction to teaching at Harvard

In this session, we will explore:

- The basic logistics of running a section at Harvard, particularly in the Gov Department.
- A pre-semester checklist of Teaching Fellow roles and responsibilities.
- The faculty, staff, and students involved with teaching in the Gov Department.

By the end of this session graduate students will enhance their:

- Sense of the departmental community that supports teaching challenges and celebrates teaching successes.
- Understanding of Teaching Fellow Title IX responsibilities.
- Knowledge of the academic and mental health supports available to students.

Resources and readings

- [Bok Center for Teaching and Learning](#).
- Coleman, David. (2019). "[There's More to College Than Getting into College](#)." *The Atlantic*.
- [The Crimson's Class of 2025 profile](#).
- The Bok Center's [Glossary of Teaching-related Terms](#)

Tuesday, September 3rd: The fundamentals of good teaching

In this session, we will explore:

- Learner-centered teaching models and active learning strategies.
- Backwards planning section and syllabi.

By the end of this session graduate students will enhance their ability to:

- Implement strategies to communicate course concepts and materials.
- Backwards plan both individual lessons and the semester as a whole.
- Design section syllabi that share goals and set norms for the classroom.

Resources and readings

- Lang, James. "[How to teach a good first day of class](#)." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- [ABL Connect](#): A Harvard-based repository of active-learning activities.
- The Bok Center's [introduction to learner-centered design](#) and [first day of class resources](#).
- Brown, P. C., Roediger III, H. L., & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). *Make it stick*. Harvard University Press.
- Gooblar, D. (2019). "Helping Students Revise Themselves." Chapter 1 in *The Missing Course: Everything They Never Taught You about College Teaching*. Harvard University Press. (available online on Hollis).

Tuesday, September 10th: Discussions and Practice Opportunities—The Basics

In this session, we will explore:

- The qualities of an effective classroom discussion.
- Strategies for managing a scholarly discussion on a charged political topic.
- Effective practices for different types of content and courses.

By the end of this session graduate students will enhance their ability to:

- Implement best practices for increasing student participation in discussions and understanding of key takeaways.
- Assess student learning in discussion-based sections.
- Develop effective practice opportunities related to course content and skills.

Resources and readings

- Howard, Jay. "[How to Hold a Better Discussion: Advice Guide.](#)" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Reid, Rosie. (2019). "[A state Teacher of the Year shares her techniques for increasing the number of students who talk and share their ideas in class.](#)" *Edutopia*.
- Reznitskaya, Alina & A.G. Wilkinson. "[Teaching Students How to Think and Argue Together.](#)" *The Blog of Harvard Education Publishing*.
- Ross, Loretta. (2019). "[Speaking Up Without Tearing Down.](#)" *Teaching Tolerance*. Issue 61.

Tuesday, September 17th: Developing and Grading Assignments Effectively

In this session, we will explore:

- The qualities of a fair and effective assessment (including homework, quizzes, tests, essays, problem sets, or final exams).
- The impact of using a rubric and criteria for success to grade student work.

By the end of this session graduate students will enhance their ability to:

- Incorporate effective assessment design and grading practices into their own section for the semester.
- Provide efficient and effective feedback on student work.

Resources and readings

- Brookhart, Susan M., Thomas R. Guskey. (2019). "[Are Grades Reliable: Lessons from a Century of Research.](#)" *ASCD Education Update*. 61(5).
- Sackstein, Starr. (2019). "[PSA: When Giving Feedback, Don't Lead with 'I Love' or 'I Like'.](#)" *Education Week*.
- The Bok Center on [Grading and Designing Student Work](#).
- Gooblar, D. (2019). "Assessment Isn't Just Assessment." Chapter 5 in *The Missing Course: Everything They Never Taught You about College Teaching*. Harvard University Press. (available online on Hollis).

Tuesday, September 24th: Creating an inclusive classroom

In this session, we will explore:

- Research-based strategies for creating an equitable and inclusive environment.
- How extra-curricular experiences (in the broadest sense of the term) influence students' course experiences.

By the end of this session graduate students will enhance their ability to:

- Reflect on their own teaching practices, including strengths and weaknesses regarding creating an inclusive climate.
- Frame contentious conversations to encourage genuine intellectual debate.
- Solicit and respond to feedback from students about section.

Readings and Resources

- The Bok Center: [Inclusive Teaching](#).
- McMurtie, Beth. (2019) "[Knowing How to Study Can Mean the Difference Between Success and Failure for First-Generation Students. Here's How Instructors Can Help.](#)" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- Patel, Vimal. (2017). "[Teaching the Art of the Difficult Classroom Conversation.](#)" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Tuesday, October 1st: Teaching Skills—Reading, Writing, Math, Coding

In this session, we will explore:

- Undergraduate writing instruction and reading/writing development Harvard.
- A standardized, department-wide model for social science writing.
- Common challenges in teaching math and coding in Gov.
- Best practices for responding to these challenges.

By the end of this session graduate students will enhance their ability to:

- Reflect on the skills, knowledge, and experience involved in social science reading and writing.
- Teach reading and writing utilizing a toolkit of pedagogical strategies.
- Design in-section exercises that enhance student learning in mathematics and coding.

Readings and Resources:

- [HarvardWrites](#) and [GovWrites](#).
- [Harvard College Writing Program](#) and [Harvard College Writing Center](#).
- Undergraduate [Guide to writing a Senior Thesis in Government](#).
- Bailey, Michael A. 2019. “Teaching Statistics: Going from Scary, Boring, and Useless to, Well, Something Better.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 52 (2). Cambridge University Press: 367–70. doi:10.1017/S1049096518002044.
- Loepp, Eric. 2019. “Data-Based Teaching: An Introduction and Call for Collaboration.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 52 (4). Cambridge University Press: 743–48. doi:10.1017/S1049096519000568.

Tuesday, October 8th: Navigating difficult conversations/dynamics in the classroom

In this session, we will explore:

- Strategies for handling relationships with course heads and teaching teams.
- Creating classroom environments that foster open, respectful discussion.
- How universities and teachers are responding to generative AI.

By the end of this session graduate students will enhance their ability to:

- Respond confidently to challenging situations that emerge while teaching.

Readings and Resources:

- The Bok Center: [Navigating difficult moments](#).
- The Bok Center: [Teaching and mental health](#).
- Terry, O. K. (2023). [“I’m a Student. You Have No Idea How Much We’re Using ChatGPT.”](#) *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.
- University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching: [Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or High-Stakes Topics](#)
- [The Chatham House Rule](#)
- [Harvard Student Handbook](#), policy on Unauthorized Recording— Page 57

Comments and suggestions:

We always welcome your comments and suggestions. Please feel free to get in touch at any point with feedback.