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Illinois Political
Science Math Camp
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*All suggestions and
comments are my own.

Making the most out of your graduate school experience*



You are a **student**.



You are a **teacher**.



You are a **scientist**.



You are a **colleague**.

So what's this grad school thing?

Some specific suggestions...

Success as a student

- Read actively. Come to class with questions about the articles.
- Identify your research questions early.
 - Most classes will have research papers due at the end of the semester. Start thinking about your research question early – you'll write a better paper.
- Work together.
 - Whether in quant, prepping for comprehensive exams, or writing papers, it is very helpful to talk with each other about your questions, ideas, etc.
- Know the rules for the courses you need for graduation.
 - Talk to Matt Winters (DGS) if you have any questions about what courses count for what – sometimes there can be some flexibility in the requirements toward which courses can count.



Success as a student

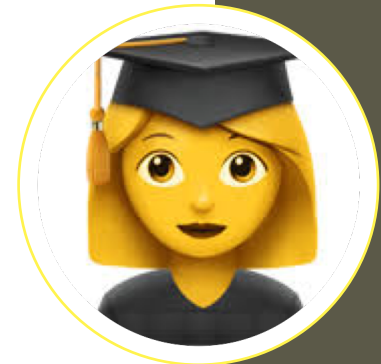
- Don't be afraid to explore your own ideas.
 - If you are curious about questions that may not be conventional political science, go ahead and study it.
- Learn to teach yourself.
 - We will be given some basic tools, but much of what we learn is through work on our own.
- Go the extra mile to learn and receive additional training. Now is the time to do it!



Success as a student

Resources

- Seek out the methods training that you want to use.
 - Our department will teach us the basics of quantitative analysis and some formal theory, but you will need to do more to train yourself and become good at it.
- Interested in statistics and machine learning? Talk to Wei Zhong (your Methods TA), wzhong8@illinois.edu.
 - Stats Dept: Stat 400, 420, others
 - Econ Dept: Econ 532, 535, 536
- Interested in formal theory? Talk to Ekrem Baser, baser2@illinois.edu.
- Interested in experiments? Talk to Chris Grady, cdgrady2@illinois.edu.
- Interested in computational modeling? Talk to me, nchen3@illinois.edu.



Success as a student

Resources

- Big Ten Academic Alliance Traveling Scholar Program
- Classes through the Consortium -- Big10 schools + Uchicago
- Spend up to a year in a peer institution, take courses, work with a prof, use their labs etc.
- Attend summer institutes for additional methods training – EITM, ICPSR, Santa Fe Institute
- Check out different certificates on campus that are relevant to you.
 - At Illinois, you can double count classes for certificates, but you can't double count classes for minors. If you're planning to take courses that will count towards the certificate, you should also get the certificate.
- Read through Graduate College emails. There are lots of helpful resources on these emails.



Success as a teacher

- Take your students seriously.
- Obtain at least one teaching certificate.
- Give yourself enough time to produce good class material.
- When you're stuck on answering a question, ask the student or class what they think about the question.
- Teaching is a performance. Have fun with developing your own style.
- If you are interested mainly in teaching, ask the DGS to give you assignments where you teach your own courses and design your own courses.



Success as a teacher

- Give yourself enough time to grade.
- If your professor doesn't have a clear grading rubric, develop one for yourself and the other TAs.
- Grade together to help maintain consistency across grading.



Success as a teacher

Resources

- CITL
- Interested in pursuing a teaching career? Talk to Thomas Lassi (lassi2@Illinois.edu) or Julian Scheirer (scheirr2@Illinois.edu).



Success as a scientist

- Learn to write well. Writing is our main form of communication.
- Learn to present well. Presenting is our other main form of communication.
- Learn good practices for collecting data.
- Develop a clear and transparent workflow.
- Take advantage of the research pool, labs, and workshops.
- Ask for feedback about your work.
- Learn to give constructive criticism.
- Learn to receive criticism well.



Success as a scientist

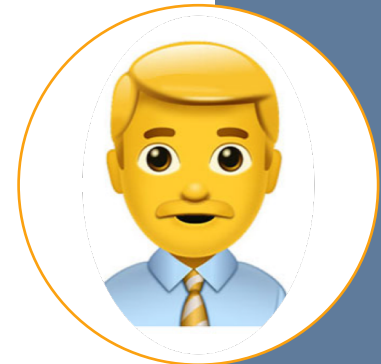
Resources

- Discipline-wide listservs (Polmeth)
- Talks, workshops, research pool for lab experiments
- Blue Waters, Keeling, and cluster computing for computational work
- Github, Asana, or other applications for workflow
- If you want your own website, you can create a microsite on publish.illinois.edu



Success as a colleague

- Treat the department as a professional workplace.
- Be respectful and cognizant of your peers.
 - We are a multi-cultural and diverse department. We all have implicit biases that negatively affect how we treat each other – try to be aware of them and avoid acting on them.
- Participate actively in the department.
 - Help out Brenda and Kate, help set up for events, attend department-related social events, etc.
- Be respectful of the physical space.
- Be cognizant of the norms of the department.
 - If you don't know what to do in a situation, you can always ask another graduate student and see what others are doing.



Success as a colleague

Resources

- PSGSA, publish.illinois.edu/poliscigsa
- Women's Resource Center
- GEO



Some general suggestions...

Time Management

- Learn about your own pace of work and schedule your days to take advantage of your most productive hours.
- Applications such as Evernote, Asana, and other planners might be helpful to you for time management, if you like to plan.
- Protect your time – just because you don't have a meeting or have to teach does not mean that you are available. Block out time during the day for writing and reading.
- It helps to put yourself on a schedule.

Work/Life Balance

- Give yourself breaks. We all burn out at some point in grad school. Make sure to schedule breaks for yourself.
 - Take Thanksgiving and Spring Break off.
- Participate in social activities in the department, around campus, around town, etc.
- Participate in the larger community of Urbana-Champaign.

Work/Life Balance: Activities in Urbana- Champaign

- www.visitchampaigncounty.org/events
- Taste of Champaign-Urbana is this weekend!
- Music festivals
- Volunteering:
 - CU One-to-One Mentoring
 - Humane Society
 - Eastern Illinois Food Bank
- Sports leagues
- Arts and Culture
 - Krannert Center
 - Virginia Theatre
 - Station Theatre

Attitude matters a lot

- Be curious
- Work hard
- Persevere
- Respect each other's work
- Have fun!