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Teaching Reflections

I have compiled here detailed descriptions of my experiences as an instructor and Assistant in Instruction (AI). Each section discusses a different course, reviews selected experiences from that course along with student feedback, and provides my reflections for improving my teaching based on my experience.

1 Representation, Identity, and Dissent (Instructor, Summer 2020)

I was the sole instructor for a course titled Representation, Identity, and Dissent in Summer 2020. Twelve students enrolled in this course. The course was designed to bring together literature on different types of identity (ethnicity, gender, religion, region) and action (representation, protest, civil war, decentralization). The two main methods of assessment were research article writing and community engagement. I evaluated the effectiveness of the community engagement activities in a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project.

Course Structure

This course was designed to build off of the Introduction to Comparative Politics course discussed below by further empowering students to work through the research article writing process and to make this process more relevant and important by tying in community engagement activities.

When thinking about course design, I consulted many syllabi for existing courses that tended to focus on a single identity or action. Courses like ethnic civil war or women and politics are quite common. These single topic courses are valuable and offer a deeper look at a single topic, but I felt that there is also something to be gained by trying to try to make more direct comparisons between different types of identity and action. As such, this course took a broader approach, encompassing many different identities and types of action. The flexibility that this provided was actually quite helpful, as I taught the course in the middle of large Black Lives Matter protests in the United States; the course structure made it easy to incorporate these topics into our discussions.

Substantively, the course was arranged into three parts: conceptualizing different identities, linking identity to action, and extending the identity-action framework. Within these substantive boundaries, students worked through writing their own research article related to the course and participated in several small-scale community engagement projects.

This was an online course that used both synchronous and asynchronous modalities. I surveyed students before the course began about their preferred online learning methods and what had worked in the previous semester when the university shut down and transitioned to online-only learning. Student preferences and opinions were all over the map, so I decided to build in as much variation as possible.

The basic structure was that Monday, Wednesday, and Friday were synchronous class days and Tuesday and Thursday were asynchronous. Mondays were devoted to the methods workshops (described more below) that taught students how to write each component of their research article. Wednesdays and Fridays were reserved for substantive discussion and activities as well as community engagement experiences. On asynchronous class days, students were expected to update individual blogs that they created and to provide substantive

comments on others' blogs. Tuesdays were also when students peer reviewed each others' work.

The feedback below indicates two themes: first, that the course is a lot of work, but second, that the work is worth it. I am comfortable with asking a lot of my students if they believe that the work they are doing is valuable, and that seems to be the case for this course. Students also remarked that they appreciated the structure of the course and the course design and that it was accessible to students of all backgrounds, not just political science majors.

Feedback:

- "Professor O'Brochta was phenomenal and just a joy to take a class with him. He is very quick to respond, goes out of the way for his students, is adaptable, and gives very helpful feedback. He does everything in his power to help you understand and gain something from the course material and truly cares about the course and his students. The course is incredibly topical and does a great job of relating material to present day. It also does not matter what your educational background is, as my class was filled with students from all areas of study and we all kept up."

- "It is a lot of work outside class. However, the work is worth it and the course is well organized to make time management doable."

- "This is an excellent course, especially if you are interested in political science! You learn how to think critically about many different political science issues and you also learn how to conduct research, which is crucial if you want to continue in the field of political science."

- "Do not be afraid to take this course if you are not politically experienced! I really enjoyed this course as someone new to polisci and I have learned an incredible amount about this area of study. The course is very engaging and has a heavy workload, however it is very manageable, not too difficult, and appropriate. I really enjoyed this course and took away more than just the curriculum."

- "Every assignment was discussed in detail in class, and expectations were very clear. The organization of the class made it less stressful than other classes I have taken."

- "The readings that were focused on ethnic identity and womens' rights really stuck with me the most. I enjoyed completing the blog reflections throughout the course, especially as I compared the readings with inclass discussions or current events. The readings/blog posts were a major component of my enjoyment with this course."

- "I really enjoyed the first few readings that discussed the definitions of ethnic identity and the term identity. Perhaps this was because I had not done any political science readings in my past so this was a cool perspective that engaged me. I loved these types of 'definition exploring' readings as they pushed me to analyze what I thought was a concrete term into an abstract variety of meanings which I had never thought about before."

- "We are learning not only based on the academic concept, but also on how to apply these concepts to real life. We reflect on readings and group discussions to come up with our own interests in particular issues that we want to study."

Assessment

More than half of students' grades were based on the different components of their research article. I had originally envisioned that students would be able to complete the empirical analysis section of their article during the semester, as this was an upper-level course. However, the lack of in person instruction combined with the majority of students having little experience in political science made this not possible. Instead, we spent one week on each of students' research questions; annotated bibliography and literature review; theory; research design; and introduction, abstract, and conclusion. I have found the research article assignment to be quite flexible, as more advanced students can easily be expected to produce higher quality work. However, it is also the case that senior majors rarely know how to write a research article in the standard article format, even if they are more experienced with different parts of the research article writing process. I attempted to strengthen the peer review component of the article writing process by asking students to provide more feedback and giving additional time in breakout rooms during synchronous class to facilitate discussion. In general, peer reviewing went better than in the past, though I still believe that it is easier to stress the importance of peer review during a longer semester.

The blog component was all new for this course. I spent a long time thinking about how to structure asynchronous class days, and I decided on blogs because of their relative simplicity and customizability. More than the reading journals I have assigned in the past, blogs facilitate meaningful student interaction and give students space to express themselves creatively. Students created their own blogs using Google Blogger which I then aggregated in Canvas so that everyone could easily access and read each others' blogs. This was key: Canvas lacks blogging features, so it needed to be very easy for students to engage with others' blogs. Apart from the change in format, my expectations for blogs were similar to those for reading journals. Students were expected to summarize the article, reflect, and answer a reading question. I have had a lot of trouble motivating students to complete reading journals in the past, even though they ultimately believe that they are worthwhile. This dynamic changed dramatically when using blogs. Students really liked the format and appreciated the fact that they were writing for an audience, not just me. Commenting was also consistent and high quality.

Finally, the course contained several community engaged components. These components ranged from a number of small assignments that students could complete individually, to a legislative policy-making simulation, to the whole class project that occurred at the end of the course. The community engaged projects provided a more explicit link between course content and students lives. They also attempted to broaden students' understanding of diversity and what it means to work with people from diverse backgrounds. The reflection components built in to each community engaged assignment helped students synthesize what

they learned from the assignment with the broad themes of the course. Hence, in a way, these assignments provided students with a way to synthesize course content.

Most of these components worked well in an online format. The biggest challenge was conducting the community engaged project, which some students remarked would have been better if it were in person. I agree, but students did appreciate including a strong emphasis on community engagement. I was especially pleased to see the reaction to the blog post component of the course. I have used reading journals before to ask students to reflect on the reading before class, but feedback on this assignment has always been mixed. Students like the accountability and get more out of the reading while at the same time feeling that the reading journal is a lot of work. What made blogs more successful, I think, is the peer interaction component. Students knew that they were not just writing a blog for me, rather, they were writing a blog for the class, so this meant that they wanted to put forward their best work and also to see what others had written.

Feedback:

- "Heavy coursework but very valuable in learning about and different identities and representation. Makes you better at writing a research paper."

- "This course was much more writing intensive than I was expecting, but at the same time nothing felt like busywork. It is a great course to learn how to write a political science research article with the emphasis on the content rather than the minutia of writing ability one may find in grading structures of English courses."

- "We had to write constantly which helped me become more comfortable expressing myself with written words."

- "The biggest thing I learned that I will take with me was how to write a political science article. This felt like a very daunting task before the course, and now I feel confident in my ability to do it for another class."

- "Professor O'Brochta was fair in his grading and feedback and helped all students no matter their background or identity."

- "I thought the blog writing was great because we had to reflect a lot on the readings."

- "The research article assignment was my favorite from a learning perspective, though policy day was quite engaging as well."

- "I really liked the policy day activity. It was interesting and felt like a great way to prepare to include policy proposals in our individually assigned research articles."

- "I can't imagine this course without the research article. I felt like that was the backbone that guided everything. While I signed up for the course for the information in the readings, the research article was by far the most useful thing for me to learn."

- "I certainly prefer the element of community engagement, as it makes the course feel much more applicable and grounded in reality. The research article assignment is also very good for anyone interested in political science or even just social science more generally."

- "I enjoyed the community engagement as it related to my personal RQ, however, I could see how others may not feel like it heavily contributed to their learning experience. I felt like it was a great way to learn more about a place we are all connected to in a realworld application, so for that reason, I enjoyed it. I also think the research article is a critical aspect of this course. I cannot imagine this same course without the research article. I felt like the article also kept me on my feet and engaged across the curriculum. Those first two (maybe one?) week without it was a little less organized, in my opinion. However, this could be due to the fact that it was the first week and I was adapting. I am confident that the removal of the research article aspect would have made me less engaged overall."

- "I enjoyed the writing components as that helped me improve those skills. Also, the community engagement aspect helped give a live example of what we were learning about."

- "I think the biggest thing I learned was how to put together a research article! I had never written anything that didn't follow the format of: 1 paragraph introduction, 3-5 supporting paragraphs each with a new reason, and 1 conclusion paragraph. Writing a big paper was really scary to think about, but you did a good job breaking it up into manageable pieces."

- "I have never thought that I would be able to complete a research article within one month. This course provides a basis for my further study in political science as well as participating in any research projects. Additionally, the course also brings me to think about current Asians' political engagement. While I have identified the two factors that are influencing their participation, in the future, I want to join in more community services and political activities as a way to mobilize more Asians. Finally, I really want to thank you for your patience and detailed feedback on every single assignment. These comments really helped me to catch up and improve the research article."

- "This is really an excellent course. One thing I want to change is that I wish I can take this class in the form of facetoface so that I can have the opportunity to meet people from OYC [the community partner] which is a local organization that we are trying to help and provide policies to solve environmental racism."

- "Obviously, online format was challenging at times and the course probably would have been better in person. That being said, it was about as good as it could be online. There was a lot of writing, and I know it was only a 5 week course, but it might have been better if we started writing a lot more in the second week of class, as opposed to the beginning of the third week just to break it up a bit more."

- "If this course happens over zoom again, I would have preferred the class times spent on the project with OYC to be replaced with regular lectures. I don't think the project felt that relevant when we weren't actually interacting with them."

- "I cannot imagine a course better than this one considering the circumstances."

- "The community engagement was a bit difficult over Zoom."

Instruction

The online nature of this discussion based seminar course presented several challenges for instruction. Instructional time was split into thirds, with one third of the time spent discussing research article writing, one third on community engagement components, and one third on substantive discussions. A typical synchronous class involved extensive student group work in breakout rooms. We had several full class discussions throughout the semester, but these discussions were difficult to facilitate online. Breakout room discussions and assignments definitely were more effective.

Though students had previously negative experiences with group work online in other courses, the experience in this course was mostly positive. One simple innovation that worked extremely well was to use Google Slides as a sort of class whiteboard that contained instructions for activities that I would typically write on the board. The useful part was that I could assign students or student groups to complete an activity or writing assignment on the slide, enabling all students to work on a single document at the same time. Students could see, comment, and react on each others' work. As the instructor, I could monitor how students were doing in breakout rooms. This was critical because it is often awkward and time consuming to try to visit each breakout room during a short activity. Unlike simply listening in to an in-person discussion, joining a breakout room tends to disrupt whatever discussion is going on. Using slides that everyone could work on at once really worked well.

It was also possible to conduct the community engaged project, research article writing workshops, and legislative policy simulation synchronously. I used many of the same techniques to facilitate breakout rooms and to have students interacting. Student engagement on each others' blogs helped to simulate a class discussion environment in an asynchronous format. I used a blog aggregator to be notified about when blogs and comments were posted so that I could visit the blogs and make my own comments. Templates and examples really helped to make the structure and format of each of these assignments clear.

It was quite difficult to facilitate a seminar course online. One successful strategy was integrating the research article assignment throughout the course as a backbone for all of the rest of the course content. Second, frequent group assignments in breakout rooms provide opportunities for students to interact with each other. Managing breakout rooms and breakout room time is difficult, as one student notes, though the overall synchronous class format and discussions seemed to work well.

Feedback:

- "I really appreciated all of the group activities because it gave me a chance to really get to know other people in the course, even virtually, and digest topics through conversation."

- "As much as it was a little intimidating, conversations and discussions with various groups were really engaging and kept me on top of assignments."

- "Professor O'Brochta was engaging and very encouraging of unique perspectives and experiences. I think he did an amazing job highlighting the experiences relevant to

now. For example, [a student] wrote a blog about the Hong Kong protests as he is in China currently. We spent a good amount of time discussing them and Professor O'Brochta engaged him and other Chinese students in discussing their perspectives. Things like this made me appreciate his leniency in our blog discussions even if they were a little offtopic from the reading question. I think this lack of sticking to the topic on hand facilitated healthy, diverse conversations that still remained relevant to the entire course. I enjoyed that a lot of our conversations emerged out of this and were not exactly planned by his curriculum verbatim. I believe this heavily contributed to me engagement and what I took away at the end of this course."

- "He gave everyone the chance to comment or ask questions in every class. While people in my spring classes didn't ever seem eager to participate, I never noticed any lulls after William asked our class questions. He also gave us our own individual pages with our names pre-labeled in shared powerpoints where we had space to share our ideas in almost every class. We would split into smaller breakout groups to discuss our ideas, which gave everyone the ability to be actively included. He did a great job during the breakout group times switching between groups to help out."

- "This course gave me invaluable experience in conducting political science research, and learning how to do social science research more generally. It also got me thinking about how different social movements require different elements of collective action and the emphasis of different identity-based characteristics. I will certainly apply this new knowledge of research methodologies, identity, representation, and dissent to future classes. I will also remember to engage with my community to make real change! Thanks so much for an awesome class!"

- "... sometimes we really didn't have enough time for breakout room activities and were just throwing stuff together when the 60 second timer came up."

- "Thank you so much for such a great summer session. I felt that your teaching style was one of the best I have ever experienced. It was creative and your enthusiasm was obvious. Thank you!"

- "I've learned so much throughout these five weeks, it is hard to pick one thing. I think one element that I had not previously had experience in though is the elements involved in the research paper. This process has been so helpful for me and I genuinely enjoyed constructing each of the elements to my paper. While I know that my first research article still has room for improvement and growth, I'm excited to bring the skills I gained from it to future classes. Thank you again for all of your feedback and support. I really appreciate it."

- "As someone who came into this course hesitant about political science, especially writing the research paper, I have a new found confidence and desire to explore different subjects to broaden my point of view. I really enjoyed and appreciate your style of teaching and the way you allowed us all to tailor our content through the RQ to personal interest. This kept me continually engaged, something that is not always the case with my other courses."

Mentoring

Research article writing requires a lot of individual mentoring. In the past, this mentoring can easily occur before or after class, and small check-ins can then translate into longer meetings at a later time. It was more difficult to facilitate these more personal interactions in an online setting, as students joined the class session right when it was supposed to start.

I made several decisions throughout the course that built in mentoring structure. First, I used frequent ticket out assignments to check in with individual students using the chat feature of the synchronous meeting software. After reading student replies, I sent follow-up e-mails to students who were asking for help or having problems. During the first week of the course, I met with each student individually during class time. This took up a substantial amount of class time, but I found these meetings to be extremely valuable. Students met with me for about four minutes wherein we discussed their interests in the course and their initial thoughts for their research questions. More than anything, these meetings showed that I was interested in each student and created a positive classroom environment where students were willing to seek out help frequently. I was pleasantly surprised that students frequently utilized office hours. For those students who were not able to attend, I made sure to provide feedback on in-class activities. Another advantage of providing this kind of feedback was that students could look through their peers' work and how I responded to peers and get a better sense of the best way to think about a particular research article writing component.

It was a challenge to adapt to mentoring and fostering a classroom community in an online course. Student feedback indicates that I was able to successfully do this. Constant presence and engagement were key to the course's success.

Feedback:

- "Professor O'Brochta is a solid guy and genuinely cares a lot which is cool."

- "This professor is so enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Instead of grading harshly, this professor takes a genuine interest in improving the skills of his students by offering in-depth comments and feedback."

- "Professor O'Brochta really wants to help us to learn. I really appreciate his detailed and thorough comments on my regular blog and any other assignment."

- "The instructor offers exceptional feedback and support."

- "Professor O'Brochta's availability helped a lot he was always willing to answer questions and his directions were usually very clear."

- "Professor O'Brochta's feedback was instrumental in adding to my overall knowledge of course material. While I was able to complete assignments on my own, having the chance to review my work after receiving his feedback was very helpful, as I was able to evaluate my work in a new light that helped me to see my flaws and make appropriate changes."

- "I really enjoyed the class and my interest in political science has certainly grown! I appreciate you being available to answer my frequent questions as I navigated writing my first political science style work. I definitely learned a lot, and I look forward to applying my new knowledge to future classes and community engagement undertakings!"

- "As I stated in the midterm survey, the workload is substantial, but the pride after completing everything in your class brought me the ultimate joy. As I finished the research article, I have to say that your course pushed my limit in the study. It brings politics education to life and gives me the taste of current society. Your teaching made me think beyond the political system, and came up with the thinking reflected in my work, talked in your class, and all my other places. When I look through your PowerPoint and rethink your lectures (more likely to be a discussion), I realize that every success I had this summer session is related to the experience you offered me (your class made my other class looks natural). In Business School, every day, we learn to change the world, and we always believed that we know everything about how the world works. Your class forced me to think again about what I learned before."

What I Learned

Students were both able to complete the research article writing process and to conduct several community engaged learning projects in an online course environment. There were challenges for both students and myself and not everything worked. However, students were able to accomplish a lot in a short period of time in a course format that was new for everyone.

One important point I will consider in future courses is that everything takes more time when it is done online. This seems counter-intuitive, as students never have to physically go to class. However, even simple things like putting students into breakout rooms took more time than a think-pair-share activity. It was also more difficult for students to communicate with me and with each other throughout the semester because they could not have informal conversations before or after class as easily. In short, teaching online made each component of the course a little bit more work than it would have been in person.

I was pleased to see that students were able to achieve the learning goals I set out in an online format. Though some of the community engagement activities were a bit disconnected from reality in an online format where we could not physically meet the project beneficiaries, students really benefited from the opportunity to engage with this content.

The original design for this course required an introductory political science course as a pre-requisite; I removed this requirement in order to appeal to the relatively small group of students who take summer courses. While it was difficult at times to fully engage course concepts when students had minimal background in political science, I did not find this to be as big of a problem as I had anticipated. I was once again successful at introducing research article writing to students who had never had this experience. The selection of course

readings and other assignments also were quite scalable to engage students with different levels of experience.

2 Introduction to Comparative Politics (Instructor, Summer 2019)

I was the sole instructor for an Introduction to Comparative Politics course in Summer 2019. Nine students enrolled in this course. This course was structured around teaching students to write a political science research article in addition to discussing typical course content. I evaluated the effectiveness of this course structure in a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project.

Course Structure

This course had two main learning goals: introducing students to work in comparative politics and empowering them to get involved in the political science research process. The first goal is quite different from simply learning about different systems of government. Indeed, I wanted students to get engaged in the discipline and to learn how political scientists do research. Should students continue in the major, they will need to read, react, and produce research and engaging students with research is an excellent way to excite them about the discipline. Students come to comparative politics with almost no existing knowledge, and instructors have a limited opportunity to introduce them to the subject and excite them about a topic that may not have been on their radar. What better way to do so than to help them investigate their passions, situate them in existing research, and help students learn how to evaluate proposed policy solutions.

A course with these overarching objectives called for a complete re-design of the typical comparative politics syllabus. For one, the entire course needed to be structured around teaching students how to engage with and produce political science research. Each journal article we read needed to further both a substantive and a methodological goal. Methodological goals also needed to be topical: if students were writing theoretical arguments in their own research projects, then the articles we read needed to have strong theories so that students could study those arguments in class and create similar ones of their own.

Substantively, the course was arranged in three parts: building or justifying the need for a state, examining the variation in institutions within a state, and engaging how citizens interact with the state. The third part of the course was particularly important in my mind because much of the thrust of the course was policy oriented. In order to empower students to produce their own research, students needed to work through the policy development process and see ways in which they could influence policy. As a result, we limited the time spent discussing institutional typologies. We did cover conventional topics like types of legislatures and governments, but we used these typologies as a starting point for broader discussions about the role of institutions in shaping political behavior instead of focusing on institutional features for their own sake.

The goal of helping students produce political science research drove most of the rest of the structural decisions about the course. Students were primarily assessed based on their

submissions of parts of a research article that they successfully completed by the end of the semester. These components included: a research question; an annotated bibliography and literature review; a theory section; a research design; and an introduction, abstract, and conclusion to the whole article. Students had the option to write a hypothetical results section, but, as this was not a research methods class, students did not carry out the empirical analysis. This course was the first time the overwhelming majority of students had been exposed to political science and the first time anyone had attempted to conduct political science research. It was therefore critically important to devote at least half of every class session to working on activities related to different parts of the research article.

Additionally, once students turned in each part of their research article, we spent a full class day recapping what students learned about the part they turned in and preparing for the next part of the article. These "Methods Workshops" tied all of the article writing material we worked on in individual classes together and provided students with an opportunity to learn about each other's work. Since there were no exams in the course, peer reviews and discussions with other students about their research partially served to reinforce and synthesize course content.

There was no textbook required for this course because one objective was to help students learn how to read research articles and analyze them. As a result, the research articles selected had to cover basic substantive topics in the text in order to provide students with enough information for them to understand the theoretical arguments and empirical results. Articles that balance detailed descriptions of concepts are difficult to come by; I intentionally favored articles that did a good job of explaining such concepts over articles published in top outlets that lacked this explanation. The substantive content in the first and last third of the course lent itself well to this format and required time in class introducing fundamental concepts. The middle third of the class was focused on institutions, and few articles adequately describe institutional typologies well enough that class time can be completely devoted to discussion. Additionally, this middle third required the most methodological explanation. Group activities about regression analysis are only helpful once students all understand basic principles. As a result, some students observed that class sessions ranged widely in instructional format due to these challenges. In the future, it would be good to more clearly outline this pattern upfront so that students would know to expect it.

As two students noted, this course moved quickly and covered a lot of topics. This format is typical of introductory courses, though as one student notes, reading actual journal article exacerbates this problem because journal articles are about specific topics in broad research fields. The student's suggestion about thinking more about how and when reading questions are asked might be a good way to address this issue. I was encouraged by the very positive feedback on the overall course design and how much it motivated students to learn and feel empowered during their time in the course.

Feedback:

- "William is pedagogical prodigy. He has consistently demonstrated an unusually strong ability to teach and more importantly has the passion and drive to constantly improve himself. His teaching even exceeds many of my previous, tenured professors. William

would be an incredible addition to any department. His presence should be viewed not as a cost but as a highdividends investment."

- "William does truly respect everyone and gives everyone opportunity to bring up his or her idea to the class."

- "This is the first politics related class that I have ever taken, and it was something I enjoyed doing, as well as actually learned a lot from. I became better at managing a heavy work load. I learned about what questions to ask and how to be more thorough when explaining something."

- "This has been the most rewarding political science course I have ever taken. William did a really good job of teaching and reinforcing [how to read and analyze articles]. I thoroughly enjoyed writing my article, as it was a very rewarding experience. This is the first political science course where I felt like a political scientist."

- "William was always on time grading and up front on what he expected of us. More political science classes need to use the canvas weighted grading system he used and updated daily. We were never kept in the dark with how we stood in the class and more professors and courses should take William's example."

- "Maybe just a little bit slower would help with the stress."

- "Perhaps covering fewer topics would [make for an easier course], but I liked how I got learned a little bit about a lot of different topics." "Fewer topics would allow for a much deeper understanding of each topic." "I do like that we covered a lot of information. Yes, it was in a very short amount of time, but I'm going to school to learn so I'm glad that's what we did." "[The class] is great and well-thought out."

- "The readings often discuss very specific topics in very broad fields research... after the class for the reading, I feel much more confident I understand the field as a whole... [perhaps move the reading questions] to the day after their respective readings are assigned."

Assessment

Almost fifty percent of students' grades were based on different parts of their research article. After turning in each component of their article, students conducted peer reviews and received instructor feedback. Students could rewrite their literature review and theory sections and turn them in for regrading if they wanted to improve their score. Regardless of whether students exercised this option, each subsequent component of the article required students to revise previous components so that they built their full article throughout the semester. Students also received credit for their participation in the peer review process. The compacted schedule of the semester made it difficult for students to work through the entire article process, but students consistently reported that the process taught them a lot.

As a compliment to the research article, students translated their article into a policy proposal and articulated that proposal in a policy briefing paper. The purpose of the briefing

paper was to help students see that their research could have a meaningful impact on policy and to think about the importance of policy-based research more carefully. This component was also designed to motivate students and to help them think about political science in a different way.

To reinforce concepts students learned while reading assigned articles, I asked students to complete two page Reading Journals. Journals included a short summary, a short reflection, space for a question, and a page responding to a reading question that formed the basis for the ensuing class session. Journal entries were a step-up in quality from the previous time I used them; this was likely due to the template I provided and the time we spent discussing how to read a journal article in class.

Because the course lacked traditional exams, I developed several ways to measure formative and summative knowledge. Reading journals provided an initial assessment of formative knowledge, and I supplemented these journals with frequent tickets in or out. As a way to help students synthesize material throughout the course, I asked students to engage in concept mapping both individually and in small groups. Initial concept maps were meant to simply link different typologies and topics we covered on each class day together. The final concept mapping exercise of the semester asked students to work in small groups to place each other's research questions into the concept map and to engage these questions with the topics we studied throughout the semester. In general, the concept mapping activity was successful, but I would also like to develop another summative assessment technique to use once or twice throughout the semester that is an alternative to concept mapping for students who are not visual learners.

Students seemed to benefit a lot from writing the research article and spending so much time focused on this task. Reading Journals and summative concept maps were designed to take the place of exams and to check student understanding. For the most part, this strategy seemed to work well. I do want to consider implementing other summative assessments that are not graded, but that encourage students to reflect and synthesize the material they have learned in different ways.

Feedback:

- "Working on the research article over the course of the whole semester really helped me learn about how political research is conducted and allowed me to make connections between articles we read and topics we covered in class." "Doing the research article made it easier to read other academic journals and made me like political science methodology a lot more." "Although the research article can be improved, it undoubtedly was a key reason this course was so impactful."

- "Before this class, I had no idea what a literature review was or how to conduct research on global political topics beyond surveying a population. I feel as if I'm much better at reading the research of others and bringing their thoughts into my own discussions and writing. I am confident that I could independently outline a research article on my own time."

- "Each research article was essentially personalized for each student so they chose what

topic interested them most and worked on trying to incorporate it into a formal research paper."

- "We never had any exams. There is a lot of information that we cover, so it would have been difficult to have been tested over it, but additionally, the group discussions and the reading journals we had on subjects were very helpful to me to learn the material." "Writing the research paper will help me retain more information than taking exams would have." "I would honestly like some exams because it felt like the lectures were a little pointless since we were not being tested on them."

- "The reading journal, daily assignment, helped me actually understand the articles by making me summarize them. Some statistics was incorporated that helped me understand the research components of the assignment." "I liked how the lectures were engaging purely for the learning aspect not to write down everything for some exam. I liked how the class had writing projects." "[Reading Journals] helped me summarize and conceptualize the concepts and ideas present in the various articles."

Instruction

Instructional time in the course was split between a limited amount of traditional lecturing, small and large group work, discussion, and other activities. Due to the course structure, each class session consisted of some time devoted to both substantive and methods topics. The amount of time varied considerably depending on the topic. More time was needed to introduce regression analysis, for example, then was needed to review basic principles of selecting control variables. I tried to be upfront about how each class was structured and why we were learning in certain ways. Students were asked to complete beginning of semester surveys that listed their preferred teaching techniques. Unsurprisingly, some student's favorite technique was another student's least favorite technique.

I broke classes into fifteen to twenty minute blocks and used a different instructional technique during each block. A typical class consisted of a five minute introduction, a small group activity, a short video followed by reflective writing, a large group discussion, and another small group activity about a methods topic. Short videos or references to student submitted news articles provided a way to keep the course relevant to ongoing events in comparative politics. On the whole, the class was relatively quiet, so reflective time was helpful in spurring group discussion. Some students preferred visual lecture presentations; the middle third of the class featured more of these presentations than did other classes. For those who really felt that group discussion was the best, I set aside an entire class to a student led circle discussion. Most classes adopted neither of these extremes, but tried to mix modes of instruction together so that each student would be engaged during each class.

Small group activities took on various forms to match the goals for the activity. Several activities were focused on working with data or data analysis, helping students apply the concepts from the readings to new problems. Students frequently worked together to replicate or extend parts of the analysis presented in published work. For example, student groups worked together to develop alternative measures for civil conflict and to see how well those

measures mapped on to existing work. Groups also served as a forum for debate; students spent time reflecting on an issue and picking a side, like members were placed in groups, and these groups were asked to develop arguments supporting the opposing point of view.

A major small and large group simulation took place on Policy Day. Students got into groups several classes before Policy Day and attempted to synthesize their policy recommendations based on their research article. On Policy Day, the class voted on a country in which they would be legislators. Given that country context, students worked quickly in their small groups to develop a policy proposal tailored to that country and related to each member in the group's research article. After presenting their work, students from different groups paired up and tried to negotiate a piece of legislation that preserved their policy interests and that others would vote for. The class voted on the proposals and groups re-formed to figure out the timeline for implementation, the budget, and how policy success could be measured. The Policy Day simulation connected students' research articles to substantive policy proposals and also taught them the difficulties of negotiating with legislators who are advocating for different policies.

Students reacted positively to the lack of class lectures and the emphasis on applied group work and discussions. Because this was a quiet class, discussions sometimes faltered a bit, and providing more guidance on how to have an effective discussion and practicing discussion making early in the semester should help make discussions more meaningful and ensure that all students consistently speak up during discussions.

Feedback:

- "Group work or class discussions made me formulate my own opinions on political topics. Having to think in this way gave me a new understanding of the subject matter."

- "Reading the journal articles and the discussion based classes were the two most prominent things that helped me in this course. The articles gave a concrete view into political science that elevated this class significantly above a high school class which level 100 classes sometimes cross into. The discussions were intellectually stimulating and broadened my view on the topics."

- "More mandatory speaking exercises like the 3 penny exercise we did." "A little more directed discussion."

- "I really enjoyed policy day and think it was informative in showing me how policy-making can be very complicated." "The policyday in particularly was a great learning experience."

Mentoring

Students in this course ranged from high school seniors to college seniors with majors from neuroscience to finance to psychology. The course was the vast majority of students' first experience with political science. Mentoring, therefore, was an extremely important aspect

of the course both to provide students specific verbal feedback on their research articles and to help students adjust to social science coursework. I met with each student in the class individually at the very beginning of the semester to provide targeted feedback on their research questions and to get to know them better. Following these meetings, I met with most students two or three additional times. One student needed help adjusting to reading social science research. Another student had a research topic that brought in international relations content that was not part of the course. Accessibility and a positive classroom climate were key to developing relationships with students so that they felt comfortable asking for help. After students reported struggling with their literature reviews, I walked the class through the time it took and the number of revisions I made to a recent article I had published. This is just one way that I tried to treat students as political scientists and to help them understand that the challenges they faced in the class are common. The fact that they moved through the research article writing process so quickly was a testament to individual dedication and students' relying on each other and me for assistance.

What I Learned

Students did write a research article successfully in this class. It was a difficult process for most students, but their end products were quite good and were comparable to senior capstone paper submissions. I found this format more difficult to teach than a course that relied on exams for assessments; the increased difficulty for both the students and for me were more than compensated by the progress students made in understanding and engaging with political science research.

One major improvement I would make is to the first two classes of the semester. I tried during these classes to explain the reasoning behind the way the course was formatted and to demonstrate different teaching techniques used throughout the course, but I did not successfully give students a big picture view of the research article writing process as much as I did of the substantive focus of comparative politics. The lack of this view and previewing some of the points along the way that might be particularly challenging left some students feeling frustrated after the literature review was due even though they did a fine job on the actual assignment.

During this introductory time, it would also be helpful to practice having discussions. Students were really excited to have discussions in the course; they devoted a large part of their community contract to thinking of ways to create a good environment for discussions. Though students then reported that discussions were one of the most valuable parts of the course, I feel that a "discussion about discussions" might help the class consistently have higher-quality discussions throughout the semester.

Prompt and detailed feedback was key in the course. Since this class met every day, this meant grading research article assignments and reading journals on the night they were turned in. Students reported that this was absolutely key for them to have enough time to complete ensuing assignments. Due to the rapid deadlines for assignments, some time that could have been spent editing parts of the article or more deeply reflecting on peer and

instructor feedback was lost. My current approach is to review giving and receiving feedback briefly and to take revisions based on feedback into account in assignment grades. I can do a more effective job teaching students how to work with feedback so that the revisions they make are not just surface level.

Along with prompt feedback, students had the opportunity to rewrite their literature review and theory paper if they so chose for a re-grade. This re-grade came with no penalty; the idea was for students that really struggled with the initial assignment to have a second chance to work on it after receiving written feedback. One student did take advantage of the re-grade policy in this way. She worked very hard on the initial assignment, but because of a language barrier, some of her thoughts were not clearly communicated. Rewriting allowed her to address major issues that I identified in her previous version. However, two students took advantage of the policy and turned in incomplete drafts for their first submission and then revised for their re-graded submission. In the future, the re-grading can come with a grade penalty to encourage students to do their absolute best work on the initial submission and not to rely on a re-grade.

3   Immigration, Identity, and the Internet (Co-Instructor, Fall 2018)

I was Assistant in Instruction for Sunita Parikh's Immigration, Identity, and the Internet course in Fall 2018. This was a writing-intensive course that was capped at twenty-two students.

Professor Parikh expressed to me that she wanted to completely re-design this course to more heavily emphasize different types of writing. Writing-intensive courses are upper-level seminars focused on writing, but they have flexibility in both the frequency and cohesiveness of writing assignments. Based on feedback from our Political Protest and Violence course, we agreed that both short, frequent writing assignments and a longer, cohesive writing project were necessary to prepare students for their careers.

Course Focus and Syllabus

I added a substantial number of readings to the syllabus, both to update older material and to focus the second half of the class on contemporary debates about immigration, identity, and the internet. I added new material on identity and theories of identity construction to the first part of the course. I also tried to broaden the applicability of the material by comparing and contrasting different kinds of identity and questioning identity altogether in the final days of the course. Finally, I devoted several weeks to radicalization on the Internet: a contemporary topic that I used to tie together previous theories and foundational pieces.

I also introduced a community engagement and long-term group collaboration component into the syllabus. Students were assigned to groups to conduct a debate about translation services for Bosnian immigrants in St. Louis. This project involved getting out into the community and interviewing St. Louis residents, connecting issues from class to local contexts, and thinking about issues from various perspectives. Groups produced flyers and mock newspapers in preparation for the debate, and individuals wrote opening statements both for and against the debate question. On the day of the debate, groups were randomly assigned to work together to articulate one side of the issue and come to an agreement with the other side about the best policy that satisfied everyone's requirements.

Students enjoyed the change of pace and the time we allowed them to work together as a group in class. The assignment definitely fostered group and class camaraderie. There were sufficient introductory materials in class readings to make the debate fit into the flow of the course. In the future, a more extensive debrief — perhaps dedicating a full day to talking about the debate instead of a few minutes — would help make connections between this experience and the themes of the course more clear.

Reading Journals

Reading Journals are designed to ensure that students engage with the reading ahead of time and are prepared for class discussion. These two-page assignments also help students learn to write coherent and effective pieces in a short period of time. We asked students to summarize readings, provide a short reaction and ask a question about the readings, and to think about a discussion question that synthesized what was read. Students were given flexibility to devote more or less space to each component based on their interests. The discussion question provided a known and predictable starting point for each class and ensured that even generally quiet students or those who struggle to think on their feet during a discussion could jump in and participate.

I evaluated six Reading Journals throughout the semester, providing a several paragraph response. We also skimmed Reading Journals before class to help us organize and respond to common concerns and questions. Students did not know the day they were to be evaluated in advance; this ensured that they completed all the Reading Journals even though we did not evaluate all of them. Some students found this more stressful than intended, so we allowed one "free zero" based on mid-semester feedback so that if a Reading Journal was not turned in, but the student was selected for grading, the student would be graded on a different day with no penalty.

The Reading Journals and the amount of reading in general were the most contentious features of the class. Many students recognized how the Reading Journals helped them prepare for class and kept them accountable. Some said that they were overwhelmed by the Reading Journals and the amount of reading, though we did stress strategies for reading and completing the journals in an efficient manner. Ultimately, most students reported that the course workload was heavy, but also that half of the students spent between 1 and 5 hours on coursework per week while the other half spent between 6 and 10. This fits in the recommended guideline of about 3 hours of out-of-class work to 1 hour of instruction time.

In the future, I plan on spending part of an early class discussing how to read and notate articles and write reading responses. This should help students realize when they are spending too much time on the Reading Journals. Also, I plan to develop a new system to reward students for turning in all (or almost all) of the Reading Journals.

Feedback:

- "It IS a writing intensive class so there are a lot of reading journals due that you need to keep on top of."

- "The work load is quite substantial with the two page required responses so just make sure you plan accordingly because they creep up on you and take longer than expected."

- "I think requiring reading journals definitely makes sure people do the readings for each class and helped me learn more about the topics. However, instead of having to do two every week it might have been more manageable if we all had one day a week that we had to do..."

- "Did lots of readings and reading journals which helped you actually digest what you were reading."

- "The Reading Journals were helpful in that they forced me to summarize the readings before class and pick out the points I thought were the most interesting." "The reading journals were an effective way of keeping up with the material."

- "Because the readings were implicitly mandatory, I learned a lot through this and was able to explore topics at depths and find what resonated with me."

Research Paper

The original design of this course called for two literature review papers and a final paper. These longer pieces of writing were not connected to each other in any meaningful way. The literature review paper was designed to be a familiar way to introduce our writing expectations for the course. Literature reviews focused on the most theoretical material: theories of immigration, identity, and assimilation.

I changed the second literature review paper to a paper where students were asked to articulate a theoretical argument and a falsifiable hypothesis. I expected that students would not have experience writing a novel theory, so we built in time in the syllabus to discuss the theory paper further in class. We stressed to students that we designed the theory paper assignment to build on the literature review; students who conducted a literature review on an immigration topic were encouraged to write a theory about how the introduction of the Internet may have changed the findings articulated in their literature review. About half of the class structured their theory paper in this manner. I thought this was successful, as it helped students make connections between different parts of the class while not forcing them into a topic they did not like.

In addition, both the literature review and theory papers had dedicated meeting times where students met with either one of us to receive detailed feedback on draft papers. I provided feedback on writing composition, including sentence construction, grammar, and style. My major focus was the content of the paper and the clarity of writing. For each draft, I both wrote margin comments and a several paragraph discussion of the paper as a whole with clear instructions for revisions. Students' were expected to incorporate our feedback into their final drafts. I graded those students who met with me for the literature review paper and Sunita did the same to eliminate the possibility of one of us marking off a change the student made to respond to the other. While we graded from the same rubric and also read and discussed each others papers, we recognized that our grading systems may be slightly different (as noted by a student's comment). For this exact reason, students who I evaluated for the literature review paper had Sunita for the theory paper and vice versa.

We also asked students to conduct their own peer reviews of each others' literature review and theory papers. We dedicated substantial class time to discussing the peer review process and providing guidance on successful peer reviews. We decided to give students freedom to

conduct their peer reviews and exchange them without our intervention; this strategy was successful as all students completed both peer reviews on time.

The final research paper was a twelve to fifteen page narrative about an immigrant's journey. The prompt was intentionally vague in order to give students maximum flexibility to address it in the way they chose. Formats ranged from a screenplay, to an immigration asylum legal argument, to a remake of a book, to a series of interviews with relatives. Some students liked this flexibility and others thought that it did not give them clear enough guidance. For example, our rubrics defined expectations for papers at each letter grade, but grades within letter grades were based on how well the criteria were met — an inherently subjective task. To help provide structure, we asked students to complete a series of questions about their paper and to turn them in as an outline. We provided written feedback on the outline and gave students a non-mandatory opportunity to meet to discuss. Nearly all students took this opportunity.

We hoped that the final paper could illustrate the literature and theoretical arguments made in the previous papers, essentially making it a case study for the students' theories. These connections to the theory and literature review were part of the rubric for the final paper; this gave students a second opportunity to practice implementing what they had learned. Students who were uncomfortable with the initial literature review and theory papers expressed that they "knew what they were doing" in the final paper.

Along with the paper, we asked students to create a research log — essentially an annotated bibliography — listing all the sources they used to construct their paper and to write a reflection about the research process. We encouraged students to be creative in their final paper structure. As a result, connections to theory and the literature may not have been as clear as some students would have liked. The reflection provided space for them to discuss their writing process and what they meant by certain sections of their papers. Many students said that they felt reassured by the inclusion of this requirement.

In general, students expressed that they really enjoyed the final paper and that they appreciated how everything tied together. The entire process exposed them to different kinds of academic writing, which many students thought was very helpful. Additionally, students really appreciated the draft and review process. The biggest challenge was actually one I did not expect: students had never written a literature review. Since the class consisted of juniors and seniors, I expected that everyone was familiar with literature reviews and students said they were comfortable with them before the draft literature review was due. However, the drafts were not what the rubrics required and some students privately told me that this was the first literature review they had ever written. To remedy this, we spent most of a class after the draft literature reviews were due discussing how to construct a proper literature review and walking students through examples. Final literature reviews were much improved, but in the future it will be important to devote more time to the literature review regardless of the familiarity that students express.

Feedback:

- "This truly is a writing intensive course but the feedback given will really help you improve your writing."

- "It's a lot of writing, but take your time with the assignments, you'll learn a lot from them."

- "Allowing us to go through a draft phase with our papers and having one on one meetings with either Sunita or William helped me in the writing process, especially because I haven't had to write consistently for a class since Writing 1."

Course Instruction

I was the primary instructor for half of the class sessions spread throughout the course. Sunita and I wanted the course to foster a collaborative atmosphere, so team teaching was the preferred method. Thus, I was still actively engaged and participating in the half of the class sessions during which I was not the primary instructor.

I leveraged the team teaching environment to focus on small group activities and alternative teaching methods during my half of the class sessions. For example, if Sunita had conducted a professor-led discussion the class previously, I complimented this with group work and technology use. My goal was to move past a student-led summary of the reading and introduction of the discussion question in the first ten or fifteen minutes of the class session. The rest of the class typically consisted of student-led discussion about the discussion question, a small group activity that led to a larger group discussion, and several "attention reset" activities between these two components.

Feedback:

- "The professors are amazing." "Professor Parikh and William are both incredibly well informed on the issues." "Professor Parikh and William are both really passionate and knowledgeable about the subjects being taught."

- "Great course, loved the prof, interesting papers and discussions." "It is a very well-taught and interesting course."

- "I very much enjoyed this course and would recommend it to other students. It is a writing intensive course so the workload is a bit heavy, but the readings are interesting. The class is very much discussion based which I enjoyed."

- "Fascinating class if you are remotely interested in immigration, identity or the internet. Not like other more traditional writing intensive classes (e.g. Argumentation or Exposition) but engaging and provides you with a lot of information."

- "If you are interested in immigration, this class is incredibly interesting. It's cool to hear about what your other classmates have to say about the discussed topics."

- "The class is definitely discussion based and hearing different ideas and experiences based off of the readings has been interesting. Most of the learning is audio (because discussion). . .."

- "Writing heavy, but interesting material."

- "The group activities weren't worthwhile." "Maybe more group projects?"

- "The interactive aspects of the course and small group feel [were my favorite part]."

- "Teachers also actively sought out feedback from students both at the beginning of the semester and in the middle and were always willing to meet for appointments."

- "A clearer grading standard for assignments would also be helpful." "The professor explained everything clearly and thoroughly."

- "I feel like lectures could have been more substantiated with use of more technology and notes. Teachers utilized a wide ranging of teaching styles to ensure students were engaged (presentation, group project, essays, discussions, peer review)."

- "Since the class was discussionbased, it was really useful to hear other peoples' interpretations of the readings, and that helped me learn."

- "The conversational style of class allowed me to feel very comfortable talking to the professors."

- "The readings are all very interesting and intellectually stimulating."

- "My favorite part has been the interactive activities that we do in class - they really help to engage me and bring to life the concepts we've been learning about."[1]

- "I particularly enjoy having readings assigned each class period that reflect on the same topic but take on differing perspectives." "My least favorite part has been how theoretical a lot of our readings and discussions have been."

- "My favorite part of the course so far has been the connections we make during in-class discussions. For example, I genuinely enjoyed the food connection as well as the global sports connection. I now see these as part of a greater web that involves immigration, communication and cosmopolitanism which is very new but exciting."

- "My favorite part of the course so far is the flexibility in writing assignments from the reading journals to the lit review (and the final research paper which sounds like so much fun)."

What I Learned

Teaching a writing-intensive course of this type was rather difficult; we were fortunate enough to receive a substantial amount of feedback from students during before, during, and after course evaluations. It was particularly challenging to encourage students to put forth the substantial effort we expected for this class while also making sure that it was clear how all the components of the class fit and made it worth the effort. Although I incorporated many of the changes that I thought might work from previous courses, none of them were completely successful. In the future, I hope to spend more time in class further explaining the rationale behind each assignment.

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[1]Here and below from mid-term evaluations.

4 Political Protest and Violence (AI, Spring 2018)

I was Assistant in Instruction for Sunita Parikh's Political Protest and Violence course in Spring 2018. The course was previously capped at twenty students, but this time we had fifty students. Thus, my main challenge was effectively teaching protest theories and engaging students in the material when the class size more than doubled.

Activities and Lectures

Because violence collective action is one of my areas of study, I had a very active role in delivering course content. This took two forms. For many classes where we were teaching theories of collective action, I developed activities to try to communicate the theories more concretely. To illustrate the ability of small groups to form within larger ones, we strategically assigned students into large groups and asked them to choose a band to perform at an upcoming on-campus concert. Group assignment was based on where students were sitting, under the theory that friends sharing musical interests would sit next to each other and form small coalitions to advocate for their musical interests in the larger group. Once groups made their artist selections, we probed the students to see if they recognized the group assignment and how that impacted their group dynamics. From this activity, Professor Parikh became interested in incorporating activities into her teaching, and the class became much more interactive as a result.

I had the opportunity to teach classes, supervise group project work, and lead exam review sessions; this amounted to teaching approximately one third of the course. I tried to bring different teaching styles to each topic I taught. I started a class on Prospect Theory by replicating the original experiment that developed the theory with the students. Student evaluations of this class indicated that many students felt they understood the theory better after this simulation and the resulting explanation. Similarly for a class on group decision making, students formed groups secretly based on class year and made a collective decision that would only effect freshmen and sophomores. Students figured out for themselves the group assignment and reflected on how that influenced their decisions.

I employed a version of "think, pair, share" in a discussion about the media's role in generating anger. Students broke into groups and were given a newspaper article from the time and place of the assigned reading. We discussed media bias and how these biases can create anger together before groups analyzed bias in their own articles. I strategically paired groups with similar articles together and asked them to determine how the articles differed. For example, one pair of articles contained reports about the same event from two different perspectives while another pair were the same article from a wire service with just a few words altered.

A major focus of my teaching was to try to connect theories of protest with students' experiences. Unionization efforts are currently underway at WashU, so I used that oppor-

tunity for the class to study how protest groups develop messages to communicate and the purposes of these messages.

Assessments

My other main roles were to prepare students for an exam, supervise an individual research paper, and to develop and implement a group project that could work with a class of fifty students. I relied on techniques from the Theories of Social Justice class to help students with the individual paper. Because I had control over the exam content and timing in this course, I held extensive review sessions before the exam date. I reviewed both concepts and strategies for the exam at these review sessions.

Collective action is prevalent, but most observers of collective action events only see them from one perspective. The goal of the group project was to change this and help students view a collective action event of their choice from many different angles. I chose to ask groups to conduct an in-class simulation of a group making decisions about a collective action event. It soon became clear that most students had never done this type of activity before. To structure their inquiry further, I decided to hold mandatory group meetings during class to approve parts of the project. Students seemed to get more on track after these meetings. Quality for the projects and accompanying outlines varied a bit. All of the topics were interesting and engaging, but some groups really deeply analyzed the theories they were using in their simulations while other groups did only surface level analysis. Providing additional guidance on the minimum requirements for the written outline part of the project may help increase the relevance of the project to theories students have already learned and help structure their learning more.

Feedback

I will focus on the end-of-course feedback here, since I mentioned some of the within course feedback earlier. Below, I present all personalized feedback I received in my course evaluations as well as selected feedback from Professor Parikh's course evaluations relevant to the discussion.

Classroom Time: One student commented that lectures were occasionally difficult to follow. Other comments were positive. A strategy the critical student alluded to is for me to better wrap-up each block of course material in a given class. My model was to switch teaching techniques every fifteen or twenty minutes, which I think was helpful, but it could be improved by adding in a wrap-up activity like a minute write, a concluding pause or question, or a quick paired group discussion to solidify the concept and remind students of the main take-away from that block of material. I always tried to start and end class by structuring the class time and describing the main points, but doing this within a block will increase clarity.

Professor Parikh observed during class that student's failing to read the assigned material

hurt my ability to initiate active and engaging discussions. Because we each have different teaching styles, I alerted students to when I would be teaching, hoping that more of them would be ready to discuss the material, but the improvement was only marginal. Going forward, we agreed that reading journals that ask students to think about discussion questions ahead of time will help structure student engagement during discussions and allow us to reduce our talking time.

- "He had interesting lectures that he clearly know the information for and was really engaged in the class. He was always helpful when asked questions and was willing to talk about his own experiences with collective action, which was really nice. He's definitely one of the best AIs I've ever had."

- "He was an awesome AI! His lectures were well structured, and it was easy to take notes. The activities in class he led were helpful for applying concepts we were learning about as well as engaging... He made the material we were learning about interesting, and I appreciated the effort he put into helping students."

- "Your lectures were occasionally difficult to follow as you tended to jump back and forth between ideas. Work on fleshing out an idea entirely before moving on to another presentation. Professor Parikh did this too but she was better at recognizing what she did and effectively bringing things together at the end of a tangent. Other than that you did an excellent job. Best of luck in your future!"

- "William has been incredibly helpful and dedicated to the class. I was super impressed with how much he knew about the material, but also how invested he was in teaching it."

- "...remarkably good at lecturing given his age/experience. Clearly very smart and capable."

Exam: I believe that the terms exam was successful. Though some students believed that they should know more about the exam expectations ahead of time, I did explain in detail the exam scoring rubric before the exam took place. Putting this information in the syllabus could help students who were not taking notes during that part of class or chose not to attend the review sessions.

- "More clearly communicating expectations for the one exam during class and outside of the one study session would have been very helpful."

- "William was extremely helpful and responsive for both exam reviews and group projects."

- "Expectations were very clear for what material was going to be on the exam."

Group Project: Clearly, the group project worked for some students and not for others. Some students were frustrated by the deliberate lack of structure we imposed on the project, while others found it to be the best part of the class. The group project certainly appealed to a different set of students than did the exam or paper. Many students remarked that this was the first time they had done a group project in college, so the experience was rather unfamiliar.

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I believe group projects are important ways to solidify learning and to demonstrate knowledge at a higher level. A part of higher level thinking is extending models learned in class beyond the cases covered in class, and the last comment shows that at least one student struggled with that.

I can do a better job explaining the purpose of the project and how students should approach it. I was surprised at their lack of familiarity with group projects, so I believe that many students may not have taken full advantage of the project or understood exactly what they learned as a result of it. Adding structure such that components of the project are due throughout the semester will help.

- "William was extremely helpful and responsive for both exam reviews and group projects."

- "The instructions for the group project could have been more clear. There were so many components that it got super chaotic."

- Describe one thing that helped you learn: "group project."

- "The opportunity to present a collective action event and apply theorist's ideas to the event helped solidify class concepts."

- "Increasing relevancy between course material and the group project."

Individual Meetings: My strategy for working with students on the final paper and during individual meetings seems to have been successful in this course. I believe structuring paper feedback by scaffolding will help those students with a tendency to start large assignments close to their due date think about them earlier. It will also provide students with opportunities to revise their work based on my feedback multiple times instead of just once.

- "William was a great TA and was readily available for answering questions and such outside of class hours."

- "He encouraged students to seek out his office hours for extra help. I attended his office hours and he provided constructive advice for the final paper and project."

- I consulted with him about my final paper and he gave me very thorough and thoughtful feedback, which I greatly appreciate.

- "William was a great TA. Very available via email and office hours, willing to provide helpful feedback on assignments..."

General:

- "He's so nice! We all love William."

- "He seemed very nice and approachable."

- "Very very helpful."

- "Very approachable and helpful."

- "The TA was really helpful, accessible, and knowledgeable."

- "Accessible TA and accessible professor. Very clear expectations as well."

- "William (the TA) was amazing and extremely helpful. Very willing to meet with students and responds to emails very quickly."

What I Learned

I received a substantial amount of feedback from students about what was and was not working well during at at the end of the course, both written and verbal. There are a number of structural changes Professor Parikh and I discussed implementing in a future class together in order to improve the course. These strategies included: scaffolding the final paper and group project, instituting reading journals, and using pre- and post-semester evaluations of student knowledge. In terms of my own preparation, students really liked my attempts to engage them in class and my help out of class. Few students reported being confused at classroom activities, though I should spend more time explaining why each activity is important before we start. My biggest goal is to increase closure between within class blocks and to use this structure, along with the reading journals, to increase discussion and encourage more students to participate.

5 Research Workshop and Party Politics (AI, Fall 2019 and Spring 2020)

I was Assistant in Instruction for Margit Tavits' Research Workshop course in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 and her Party Politics course in Spring 2020. My duties in both courses were similar: I taught and mentored graduate students on research articles and dissertation proposals.

Instruction

The Party Politics course enrolled a large number of graduate students for our department (eleven), so Margit asked me to work with half of the students to develop their research articles that served as the major assignment in the course. This consisted of leading three two-hour workshops on various aspects of research article writing including idea generation, literature review and theory, and research design. I developed these workshops based on my experiences in the course several years prior. Before each workshop, students were expected to turn in a draft version of their work and prepare comments for other students. Each workshop started with a short lecture providing an overview of how students did on the assignment and helping students assess their major areas for improvement. I then led a discussion of each students' work based on the comments that other students had prepared. The sessions ended with me providing concrete next steps for each student to help them get started on the next assignment.

I received very positive feedback from students on the usefulness of these sessions and the comments I was able to provide.

Mentoring

My main duty in both courses was to provide written reviews of student work and to consult individually with students about their progress. Research Workshop is a writing-intensive graduate course that helps students finish their third year paper — which serves as a Master's degree thesis — and start their dissertation proposal. I reviewed student work whenever a written assignment was due throughout both the fall and spring semesters. My goal was to provide feedback that would help improve student work and to give students with clear guidance on how to move forward. I also provided written and verbal feedback to students during the workshop meetings in Party Politics. In many cases, I consulted with students individually outside of class and between written assignments to review their work and provide comments before the next assignment was due.

What I Learned

These writing assignments were challenging for most students. Students struggled to generate interesting research ideas and theories and had an especially difficult time writing in an appropriate academic style. Mentoring and advising graduate students is a different experience from mentoring undergraduates because graduate students are often subject matter experts in subfields of political science about which I know little. Though this did impact my ability to provide useful feedback at times, most of the comments I made were about refining existing ideas or developing an appropriate theory or design. I did not need to be deeply familiar with the literature on a certain topic to provide this type of feedback. In fact, feedback on writing and research designs was what students requested the most and said was most helpful. I felt that my ability to read and provide comments on draft work improved greatly as a result of these teaching experiences.

6   Introduction to Comparative Politics (AI, Spring 2019)

I was Assistant in Instruction for Guillermo Rosas' Introduction to Comparative Politics course in Spring 2019. This course has an enrollment of 90 students and took the form of two lectures and one discussion section per week. My main contribution was mentoring the ten undergraduate teaching assistants (UTA) who taught the discussion sections.

This course had previously been taught in a three day a week lecture format with no discussion section. In changing to the new format, I suggested to Guillermo that we provide ample structure for the UTAs so that they would have the tools to succeed in leading their section. I thought that this would be a great opportunity to both design lesson plans for the UTAs and to mentor them through the teaching process.

Designing Lesson Plans

Other courses in the department use the discussion section format, and what I have observed is that there is little structure provided to the UTAs asked to teach the sections. They are either on their own to develop their own lesson plans or simply ask whether students have questions about the material. Since the students in the class are mostly freshmen and the other two class periods are lectures, questions rarely span the entirety of available material.

In coordination with Guillermo, I would look ahead to the next week's lecture slides and think about broad topics that could be engaging to discuss during the sections. I had two primary goals: to help students practice applying concepts defined in the lecture and to make deeper connections between the lecture material and practical applications of political science.

The structure and format of the lesson plans varied greatly throughout the semester. In general, I blocked the 50 minute classes into three activities with time for class announcements and administration at the beginning of the class and review at the end. One of these activities was devoted to review of lecture concepts; I generally developed application based problems that students worked in small groups to solve. A second activity related to popular media. Students either read an article before class and engaged in a class discussion or watched a video and reacted to some viewing questions. In the third activity, I tried to link the concepts from the week to other classes or to each other so that students saw how what they were learning fit within the broader world of politics.

When writing the lesson plans, I balanced clear-cut activities with flexibility on the part of the UTA. I wanted all students to be exposed to the same basic material in section, but each UTA's class was different and responded to different teaching strategies. Toward that end, I also included a substantial amount of optional material in each lesson plan for use if the UTA's class got through the activities early or if the UTA wanted the flexibility to integrate some of the activities together.

Mentoring

Only one of the ten UTAs had previous teaching experience, and all but two were sophomores who had taken this class the year prior. This meant that UTAs were unfamiliar with teaching techniques and were nervous about their ability to do well. During our weekly team meetings, I was in charge of getting the UTAs ready to teach the next week's lesson plan. This consisted of reviewing what they did the week prior, asking for feedback on how different activities went and seeking out areas the UTAs found difficult.

Following this review, I walked everyone through the upcoming lesson plan. I had two goals: making sure UTAs were confident and comfortable with the content in the lesson plan and providing strategies that would help them teach the content effectively. The lesson plan itself encapsulated these goals: I described in detail the exercises and activities for each class including possible solutions or answers or discussion questions. Additionally, I provided written guidance regarding areas where students might be confused and tips to help the UTAs teach more effectively.

Instruction and Assessment

I instructed one class when Guillermo was out-of-town. The class used a number of small group activities and made connections between the material (plurality electoral systems) and contexts the students might find more familiar (local city elections). This was a big change from the traditional lecture-style format of the rest of the course. Some students came up to me after the class and said that they found it the most engaging and relevant lecture they had experienced during the semester. Other students quite rightfully found the experience a bit jarring; I outlined my approach to the class in my introduction, but discomfort resulting from the change in style was warranted. It usually takes more than one class period to get students on-board with small group activities and discussions, especially in a large class.

I took the lead on developing both formative and summative assessments. This consisted of three exams and nine homework sets. Guillermo dictated the format and style of these assessments; I provided advice to students about study techniques particularly geared to these types of assessments.

What I Learned

Designing lesson plans for others to teach and then mentoring them through teaching it relied on an interesting combination of skills. Feedback from the UTAs on the lesson plans, the way they were written, and the advice I provided on teaching both in the lesson plan and in person was very positive. UTAs consistently indicated that they felt prepared to teach their sections and reported that their sections had gone well. Both the UTAs and Guillermo indicated that the lesson plans were well done and that the teaching strategies I presented were helpful guides for teaching the section. Additionally, I was pleased to see that many

UTAs took the suggestions I provided for ways to personalize their section lesson plans and used this to create lessons tailored to their own personality and their students.

I realized that this "behind the scenes" role was quite important to the overall functioning of the course. In the future, I would like to implement a teaching crash course for the UTAs before the semester starts. I was pleased to see how much initiative many of them took to deliver high quality lessons, but more familiarity with the techniques I was asking them to perform in the classroom could have increased their comfort in teaching earlier in the semester.

7 Theories of Social Justice (AI, Fall 2017)

I was the Assistant in Instruction for Frank Lovett's Theories of Social Justice course in Fall 2017. The goal of the course was for students to become conversant in five main theories related to social justice and to apply these theories in three exams and a final paper. I approached this course in a unique way because I had never taken a traditional political theory course in either undergraduate or graduate training. This meant that I was both responsible for grading and helping the fifty students in the class with the material while also learning the material myself. Through this process, I learned a lot about my ability to understand unfamiliar material and quickly transition to breaking down the concepts to assist students who were struggling.

Professor Lovett had the course syllabus, all assignments and exams, and extremely detailed lecture notes planned from previous iterations of the course. This preparation meant that I did not develop course materials. My main role was to evaluate student learning from exams and to help students craft their term papers.

Assisting Students After a Difficult Exam

I received the first exam and the scoring rubric on the day of the exam. I immediately noticed that there was a significant gap between the expectations for the exam outlined in class and the rigor upon which answers were to be evaluated. Indeed, student performance on the first exam was relatively poor. The exam asked students to define key terms from the course, but it also required students to make connections between these terms and other course topics. Students did well recalling concepts their authors, but failed to make the required connections.

After scoring the first exam, I felt that a proactive approach was necessary to address students failure to make connections between different concepts introduced in the lecture material. This approach consisted of:

1. Extensive feedback on exams. I helped students understand the connections between concepts they were expected to recall.

2. Instructor feedback. I briefed Professor Lovett on the exam results and my main concern: that lectures were not designed for students to naturally make connections between topics.

3. Whole class feedback. I communicated with the entire class to describe ways to organize learning (especially through concept maps) as well as to improve recall.

4. Individual feedback. I met with over half of the class individually to review their performance. I asked students how they prepared for the exam to determine common

methods of studying. I then suggested new methods based on their particular strengths and weaknesses in understanding the material.

This intervention produced noticeable results from the first to the second exam. Student performance increased 10 points between exams, and the main area of student improvement was in demonstrating their knowledge of how concepts connect.

Crafting Student Term Papers

My second area of focus was on student term papers. I asked to assist in this role in order to give students the opportunity to have their work reviewed before it was evaluated. Fifteen students met with me individually and provided drafts or outlines of their essays.

A particularly common issue was that students tended to engage in summary instead of critically analyzing a topic using various theories of social justice. In talking with students, it became apparent that the cause of this issue was that students' topics were much too broad. Thus, I started student meetings by asking students to describe their topic and what connections they made between the topic and social justice theories. I used their interest to help them focus the paper on an increasingly narrow topic. This was an effective strategy because students could apply a single part of a theory of social justice and really explore how that theory worked or failed.

Professor Lovett graded the individual papers, and he remarked that the biggest problem was students who lacked focus in their essay and summarized too much. The students that I worked with scored, on average, a letter grade higher because their essays were on topic and focused.

Feedback

Student feedback reflects the disconnect students felt between Professor Lovett's lectures and the first exam, but it also reflects the impact that students felt the intervention had on their performance. I believe an area to improve in the future based on this feedback is to be more proactive in helping students even when I am not completely comfortable with the material.

- "I thought he was a very good TA. He's very friendly and always made it clear when he was available to speak to during office hours. Again, I felt the grading procedures for the course exam were a bit overly harsh, but everything was returned to us promptly."

- "He was very nice! Grading was super clear and helped me do better on next exam. Was available to talk and was great."

- "The first exam was a little wishy washy, but after the first exam William really helped us to understand specific expectations for future exams!!"

- "He was very helpful!"

- "I only really interacted with William during exams since I never really felt the need to seek help outside of class, but he seemed pleasant and his grading seemed fair."

What I Learned

I was nervous assisting with this course because of my lack of knowledge about political theory. Further, I initially felt like I did not have much influence over student learning because I was not lecturing and I had to grade using a strict rubric. I also was not able to be proactive before the first exam because I did not receive it in time. However, after the first exam, I realized that I could really help students improve learning by using the first exam as an example. I think that I was effective in this role, though I wish I had been more confident in my knowledge of political theory to involve myself in the teaching and evaluating process earlier.