

Teaching Statement

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Teaching Summary

As a teaching assistant at Harvard and a guest lecturer at Penn Law, I have had the opportunity to teach undergraduate, professional, and doctoral students a variety of subjects ranging from comparative political economy to policy analysis to microeconomics. However, while the courses and students have differed, student evaluations of my teaching have remained consistently excellent, in every case substantially exceeding the average based on any comparative measure. As a testament to my teaching ability, I recently received Harvard's Certificate of Distinction in Teaching.

Teaching Experience

In both fall 2009 and spring 2011, I served as the teaching fellow to Torben Iversen for Comparative Political Economy: Developed Countries. The class covered various topics associated with comparative political economy including central banks, political institutions, redistribution, labor markets, gender roles, and globalization. Primarily focused on the U.S., Western Europe, and Japan, the course was designed for advanced undergraduate students in political science but also included students from other majors including math and economics as well as graduate students in political science and other programs at Harvard. As a seminar course, Professor Iversen taught one two hour session, and I led two one hour sections each week. As the course was structured around academic papers from the fields of political science and economics, I often introduced related scholarly work to expand on Professor Iversen's lectures. For example, during our week investigating the roles of race and religion in explaining national differences in social spending, I spent a portion of my sessions working with the students through an empirical investigation of the impact of culture on preferences for redistribution. The course also required students to prepare weekly written responses to assigned study questions which I wrote and graded as well as two long essays for which I provided detailed written feedback on student's arguments and writing. In addition, I helped write and also graded the essay-based exam.

In spring 2010, I was the teaching fellow to Brigitte Madrian for Economic Analysis of Public Policy. As a second semester microeconomics course for graduate students in policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, the course focused on topics associated with government and business interactions including rationales for government intervention, regulation, and methods for evaluating policy. Moreover, the course covered various policy areas including the environment, energy, financial markets, insurance, antitrust, and public health and safety. Similar to the comparative political economy course, I taught a 90 minute session each week, in which I introduced new material related to Professor Madrian's lectures. I taught sessions examining prohibited markets, the political economy of regulation, political efforts to control

government agency activities, and voting theory. I also assisted in preparing and grading the final exam.

In fall 2010, I served as a guest lecturer for Cary Coglianese's Policy Analysis course at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. The course was intended to provide law students with the tools necessary for making good policy decisions. Specifically, I taught sessions on how to use microeconomic analysis as well as statistical and analytical techniques including cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis to examine policy problems. Applying these insights, I also led classes in which we used the tools to evaluate current policy concerns including climate change and the financial meltdown.

My website, <http://scholar.harvard.edu/carrigan>, has additional information on my teaching including complete course evaluations, sample teaching notes, and examples of my written feedback to students on their work.

Teaching Philosophy

My approach to classroom teaching builds from two principles: involve the students and work methodically. To that end, I make sure to explicitly incorporate questions for the students in my lecture notes. By encouraging students through my questions to help solve the important topical puzzles themselves, I not only can assist them to stay engaged, but I can also better gauge their understanding of the material in real time. Moreover, to keep a consistent pace and give students the time to process the concepts, I prefer to utilize the blackboard relative to slides. Although I will often use a current topic of interest to motivate a lecture, I am also cognizant of the importance of clearly articulating the core principles that can help students both analyze the particular application I am addressing as well as be able to apply the concept to other situations that may be relevant to them. Nonetheless, as the topics associated with my sessions described above suggest, I like to also find ways to show how concepts traditionally associated with a particular discipline can be applied in unusual ways.

Outside the classroom, I try to provide students with ample resources to have success in the class. As a student, I learned best by taking notes. However, I also recognize that for some students taking notes is a distraction. As a result, I accompany my lectures with detailed handouts that both recount the important themes and expand upon them to incorporate related topics that I may not include in the lecture. Furthermore, I believe an important component of being a good teacher is simply being available and approachable. Despite living in Pennsylvania for much of the time I was teaching at Harvard, I found innovative ways to stay connected to students. In addition to standard office hours, I made sure that students felt comfortable contacting me at their convenience either in person, via the phone, or by email. For example, in Professor Iversen's course on comparative political economy, students were asked to write essays critiquing or expanding upon the week's assigned academic papers. Given that many of the students found these assignments particularly challenging, I spoke or exchanged e-mails with every student in the class—often multiple times—to assist them in organizing their ideas and developing their arguments. The especially high ratings and favorable comments I have received for being accessible outside of class further attest to this aspect of my approach.

Teaching Evaluations

My teaching evaluations have substantially exceeded the mean in every case. Moreover, they have also improved over time. In fall 2009, I received an overall score of 4.33 out of 5 relative to the social science mean of 3.96 as a teaching fellow in comparative political economy.

However, when I taught the same course again in spring 2011, I received a score of 4.67 relative to the mean of 4.01 and was given the Harvard University Certificate of Distinction in Teaching. Finally, as teaching fellow for economic analysis of policy, my mean evaluation score was 4.71 out of 5 relative to the Harvard Kennedy School average which was 4.16. In addition to the high scores, I received a gift card from the students to thank me for my teaching in one course and was asked to write a reference letter for a student for a summer study abroad program related to my teaching efforts in another. Moreover, the below sample of comments from each course provides further confirmation of students' favorable views of my teaching effectiveness:

- “Chris is a wonderful teaching fellow, who generates enthusiasm for the subject material. He is readily accessible and always approachable.” (Comparative Political Economy: Developed Countries, Fall 2009)
- “I really appreciated Chris’s flexibility, the clarity of his explanations, and the enthusiasm he had for the material. He addressed all of the needs of his students very effectively to make sure we understood the material. I always felt like I had gotten a lot out of section and that it was time well spent.” (Comparative Political Economy: Developed Countries, Fall 2009)
- “Great guy, really smart, really approachable—makes the material relevant!” (Economic Analysis of Public Policy, Spring 2010)
- “Chris was amazing. He not only explained in further detail class concepts but he also illustrated them with new examples. He spent a ton of time preparing and he was fantastic!” (Economic Analysis of Public Policy, Spring 2010)
- “Chris is always helpful, and arranges his section to cover non-overlapping aspects of...Prof. Iversen’s main lecture. His sections are very helpful in getting the big picture.” (Comparative Political Economy: Developed Countries, Fall 2011)
- “Great TF, always available, great in section, super flexible, and definitely knows his stuff.” (Comparative Political Economy: Developed Countries, Fall 2011)

Teaching Interests

I have a broad set of teaching interests and, as I have demonstrated, am more than willing to teach courses that extend beyond my core research focus on government agency performance and regulatory policy. In addition, I am interested in developing a course (Politics of Disaster) which would concentrate on political responses to extreme events. I would both survey political reactions to the recent disasters in policy areas including financial markets, the oil and gas industry, food safety, and nuclear power while incorporating the literature—particularly research on the policy process—to help explain and critically examine these reactions. Below is a sample of the courses that I am interested in teaching:

Political Science

Bureaucratic Politics
 Comparative Politics of Developed Countries
 Introduction to American Politics
 Legislative Politics
 Methods of Political Analysis
 Political Economy
 Quantitative Methods

Public Policy and Administration

Empirical Methods and Econometrics
 Energy Policy
 Microeconomics
 Policy Analysis
 Politics of Disaster
 Regulatory Politics and Policy
 Strategy, Structure, and Leadership in Public Service Organizations

Teaching References

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