TEACHING STATEMENT

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I am providing you with this statement of teaching philosophy to enhance communication and transparency in our working relationship. It is intended to supplement our ongoing interactions and informal discussions and not to stand as a set of rigid requirements. I recognize that there is individual variability among my students in their backgrounds, aspirations, talents, progress, and accomplishments. My goal is to work with you to maximize your individual strengths and to help you develop the skills to succeed in this course. I am happy to discuss with you any or all of the items in the list below. This is a working document, and will be updated through feedback and accumulated experiences.[1]

Teaching Ethos

With over a decade's experience as a university instructor, I view my primary responsibility as developing c*ompetent producers and confident consumers* of political research. This entails a delicate balance of dedicated mentorship and encouragement of critical thinking, and requires concerted effort both inside and outside the classroom.

Teaching Philosophy

In every course I teach, a shared goal and expectation is the development of students' ability to critically assess political arguments. While the primary focus lies in the academic realm – exposing students to the seminal and cutting-edge debates in the discipline, and encouraging primary and secondary research – I challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to everyday political situations. This takes place both in class discussions as well as assignments and examinations. I feel this dual focus is crucial – whether or not they continue in academia – as the primary points of political contact for most students will consist of day-to-day work, consuming media, and engaging in casual conversations with their peers. By virtue of its dynamic character, political science lends itself very well to the concept of experiential learning, and I feel that university instructors have an obligation to provide their students with the skills necessary to engage with both the academic and 'real' worlds of politics.

[1] *This preamble was adapted from a statement of adviser philosophy distributed by Scott Lanyon, Dean of the Graduate School, and then adapted by Gordon Legge, Psychology DGS, and Moin Sayed, Department of Psychology at the University of Minnesota.*

Pedagogical Framework

I subscribe to the "70:20:10" model of learning and development: an approach to pedagogy that recognizes 70 percent of the knowledge individuals obtain is from hands-on experiences, 20 percent from relationships with other people (mentorship, coaching, group work), and 10 percent from passive learning activities like lectures and readings (McCall, Lombardo, and Eichinger). To ensure students obtain the proper grounding in content and theory, I have developed a suite of online resources for my classes, combining assigned readings with recorded lectures and online videos (e.g., CBC Archives). This type of passive learning appeals to students with different learning styles. To reinforce the lessons from these more traditional components, I make extensive use of simulation exercises, case studies, and systemic design activities in my classes, and lead regular workshops to develop students' competencies in negotiating, writing, debating, interviewing, data analysis, and other areas. I also require students to engage in group work, and endeavour to meet with all students one-on-one over the course of the term to discuss their expectations, progress, and future career paths. Through these meetings, I am able to co-create individual learning plans for each student, tailored specifically to their research and career interests. This has included establishing mentorship and coaching relationships with some students, and facilitating connections with people in my professional networks.

Expectations

I demand a lot of my students, as many of my best teachers have demanded of much of me. To be effective, this approach must involve agreement between the instructor and students on shared expectations. Early and frequently, in-class and in one-on-one meetings, I discuss with students their expectations of myself as an instructor, including my accessibility, the pace of my teaching, the fairness of my evaluations, and other aspects of the learning environment. We also develop – in concert with each other – expectations of their own performance as students. In addition to full-group discussions during the first lecture of each term, I strongly urge students to meet with me once per semester to discuss their personal progress in the course, and set aside class time to facilitate this (in smaller, upper-year courses). I frequently reserve class time for these meetings to ensure access. While time-consuming, these individual meetings have proven very effective in establishing the students' own goals, focusing their independent research, discerning their individual learning styles, and fostering solid mentor-student relationships.

This close contact with students allows me to reward students for excellence and advancement relative to our shared expectations. I believe it is important to devote attention to students who require assistance to meet their goals, as well as students who achieve and exceed them. Too often, instructors find themselves devoting too much effort toward critical comments on students'

assignments, and not enough time praising success and challenging students to improve beyond their own expectations. Thus, while I make it a policy to meet with all students receiving a 'D' or 'F' on an assignment, I also commit myself to speaking with all 'A' students, those who have made marked improvements, and those who are meeting their goals, as well. I believe this fosters a positive learning environment, where improvement and achievement are equally valued.

What do you call me?

Students often struggle with how to address their academic advisors. For a host of reasons, I prefer students refer to me as "Dr. Wesley" or "Professor Wesley" when we are working in our instructor-student capacities. This includes all correspondence including email), meetings, and in the classroom. Outside of this relationship - if we see each other at the store or work with each other on a volunteer initiative - "Jared" is just fine.

I take our professional relationship seriously, as well as the power dynamics involved. I hold responsibility over a large portion of your performance assessment, which can have real implications for your academic program and career. While collegiality is crucial, personal friendships, in this authority-driven context, are inappropriate. A handy reference point: while I'm happy to connect with my students on LinkedIn, it is not appropriate for us to have a friendship on Facebook.

Diversity[2]

Students who I work with represent vast diversity with respect to race/ethnicity, SES, gender, sexuality, immigrant generation status, nationality, religion, and worldview, among other dimensions of diversity. A major aspect of research in Canadian politics and public policy pertains to how these dimensions of diversity are related to (or not related to) political phenomena. Continuously reflecting on how our positionality, and how it may influence our perspectives on the research that we do, is a required aspect of such work. As an instructor I strive to understand and respect your position and perspectives and how they inform your work. At the same time, I strive to push you to recognize your own biases and the role that they play (for better or for worse) in your work.

Personal Life[3]

I expect my students to have a personal life outside the classroom and office, and to take breaks from working (e.g., weekends and reading breaks). People who spend all their time on work activities generally tend to be less productive over the long term, less creative in their work, and frankly less fun. People with a partner, and those with family pursuits and

[2] *Supra 1.*
[3] *Supra 1.*

responsibilities, become severely stressed if they do not put sufficient effort and time into their personal lives. I highly recommend creating a schedule. Mine is as follows: I work on weekdays 7:45am to 4:30pm plus an hour or two in the evenings (to a maximum of three nights per week). I generally do not work on the weekends. This allows me to spend time with my family without feeling guilty about not working. This is very important!

You Might Like My Courses If You Believe...

- *All students should start each course on equal footing.* And that footing is "zero." Students start with no marks in my courses, and must accumulate them through performance. For students seeking to improve their grades, this means shifting your mindset away from asking "why did I lose marks on that assignment?" toward "why didn't I earn more?" Moreover, just because you may have taken, or even excelled in, previous courses with me -- or just because we have a personal or professional relationship outside of class -- does not give you a leg up on your classmates. Just because I have never met you before, it doesn't mean you cannot succeed in this course.
- *Solid arguments, not personal opinions, should be rewarded*. I teach from an empirical, positivist perspective and expect my students to build solid arguments around sound evidence.
- *Professors should teach students "how to ask," not "what to think."* I do not require students to subscribe to a particular political ideology or to make arguments that correspond with my own political leanings.
- *Students should be exposed to pressing debates and cutting edge research*. My students are expected to stay informed about current events and delve into leading literature to help explain the world around them.
- *A full-time university education is a full-time job*. A full-time work week consists of 40 hours per week (give or take, depending on variable workloads). A full-time undergraduate courseload is 5 courses per semester. This means I expect students to spend approximately 8 hours per week on my course - only three of which are inside the classroom. These time commitments increase for graduate students, whose full-time courseloads are 3 courses and whose level of commitment to university work is higher. I expect graduate students to devote 15 hours per week to my courses.

You Won't Like My Courses if You Believe…

- *Passing a course is as easy as paying tuition.* A university education is expensive, and inaccessible to many potential students as a result. Paying tuition does not entitle you to a passing grade in every course, however. Credentials are earned, not given, in my courses.
- *Academic standards should be lower for Arts students.* We often hear how workloads and expectations are higher for students in the STEM fields. I don't subscribe to this view. The world needs social scientists as much as it needs hard scientists, and they need to be just as skilled and prepared if they are going to improve our world.

- *All learning takes place in the classroom.* In fact, far less than half of it does. Per above, I expect undergraduate students to spend a full 5 hours per week on required readings and assignments; graduate students are expected to spend 12.
- *Required readings and attendance are optional.* I spend a lot of time and energy on selecting assigned readings for my courses; they compliment -- not duplicate -- materials we cover in lectures and seminars. This means you cannot attain the full course experience without doing your homework and showing up to class.
- *Poor writing skills are no impediment to success.* You wouldn't expect a physics professor to pass a student who was unable to do math. It's the language of their discipline. The same goes for political science students. At the University of Alberta, students are expected to communicate proficiently in English. An inability to do so effectively will impact the clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness of your work. Numerous resources exist through the university to assist students with their writing. I also insist that students employ Grammarly before submitting any written assignments in my courses.
- *Great writing ability guarantees top grades.* Just because you can write a good sentence doesn't mean you can develop and support a solid argument. I expect my students to craft and collect evidence to bolster cogent argumentative and explanatory essays.

Pandemic Pedagogy

My general approach to teaching remains unchanged with the onset of the pandemic, with one important exception. I expect less of my students in terms of their ability to engage in synchronous (real-time) activities. While facetime with the instructor and peers is crucial to your intellectual development, this may not be possible to the same degree. For a variety of reasons, I assume many students will find it challenging to attend class time on as regular a basis as they would if classes were in-person. This is to ensure each student is treated as fairly as possible. I will not (and have never) use(d) attendance as an assessment tool. I will make use of asynchronous tools to ensure students who are absent from class times are able to benefit from the learning experience.