

## Certificate in College Teaching (CTT) Program

### Teaching Philosophy Statement

*Don't call me doctor, my first name is just fine.* In my four years of higher education, I had never heard those words uttered by a professor. That changed on my first day of graduate school, when my instructor informed us that he preferred we use his given name. By making this statement, he weakened an important social barrier between student and teacher. He signaled that his class would be built on a collaborative relationship in the pursuit of knowledge, rather than a top-down approach to instruction.

When considering my role as a teacher, this moment has always stuck with me. Teaching is much more than lecturing and grading assignments. Rather, the objective should be to translate complex topics into interpretable ideas, to incentivize dialogue between learners, and to create an environment that allows for mistakes. As such, I have three goals for the political science courses I will teach. First, I want to engage students in an inclusive learning environment. Second, I hope to demonstrate why the course topics matter. Finally, I will provide actionable skills for real-world application.

**Inclusive Teaching:** Before all else, I want to create an inclusive learning environment for all students in my classroom. At its core, inclusive teaching is good teaching. It is about offering students—who come from a diversity of backgrounds, identities, and experiences—a chance to build knowledge together and achieve at their highest levels. Inclusive teaching means recognizing that for students to learn, a high-trust, low-stress environment must be cultivated. Inclusive teaching emphasizes self-reflection amongst instructors and students: allowing those in the classroom to consider how our assumptions and biases impact the learning environment.

At the beginning of each course, students and myself will draft classroom rules together. I want to give students agency and control over the way they experience my courses. By crafting guidelines as a team, there will be buy-in into the system we operate with throughout the semester. Additionally, I will prioritize getting to know students, which will help me understand their personal and academic needs. This will be accomplished through an introductory course survey, which will allow me to get an overview of student demographics, prior experience, and interests. By doing so, I will have a better idea about the diversity of students so crucial to inclusive teaching. Throughout the semester, I will conduct individual and/or small group meetings to check in on students. This will ensure students are able to voice any concerns or questions they may have regarding course assignments, instruction, and the environment overall. Finally, I will establish a high-trust, low-stress environment by adhering to clear expectations for

grading assignments and examinations. Reading between the lines to understand what a professor wants creates confusion and decreases opportunities for academic growth. As such, I will ensure every assignment is complete with a rubric and that all students are able to achieve a high score if criteria are met.

**Politics and Policy Matter:** Through my instruction, I hope to illustrate why politics and policy matter. In an era of growing discontent and dissatisfaction with institutions, I feel that it is my responsibility to demonstrate how government influences our everyday lives.

I want to start by showing that government is important by illustrating the consequences of its actions. To reinforce this, I plan to conduct an exercise simulating a state legislative chamber. Each student will be assigned a particular objective on either side of a debate, in addition to influence from interest groups and constituents. Not only will this process show how legislation is implemented, but it will also give students appreciation for how compromises are made in the context of competing interests (e.g., individual beliefs, interest groups, constituents). By understanding the forces that help shape the process, they can become more engaged citizens with a greater understanding of the impact these decisions can have on the lives of citizens.

**Actionable Skills:** While the theoretical concepts taught in political science courses are important, they should be enforced with actionable skills. As such, I will design materials which can be applied to professional settings in students' careers.

For example, I will create assignments which allow students to explore different forms of communication. For many students hoping to work in government or adjacent fields, being able to communicate factual information effectively and with conviction is paramount. I plan to prepare students for their professional aspirations by working with them to prepare memos, create effective presentation slides, and conduct oral presentations. This will illustrate the connection between the concepts taught in political science to real-world usage.

I am continuously striving to become the best teacher I can be, for the benefit of students, my colleagues, and university alike. After serving as a graduate assistant, I understand that a crucial part of this journey involves learning from students, who have just as much to teach me as I do them. I will utilize pre-post surveys, course evaluations, and class exit slips to determine whether students feel that they have learned the material and whether I achieved my three goals. Overall, I hope my passion for policy and government inspire students and leave them with a great understanding, applicable skills, and appreciation for the complex world around them.