

If I were to summarize my teaching philosophy in a single word, it would be empowerment. Often times, students – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds – leave social science with substantive knowledge and skills but little idea of how to apply it *or* confidence in doing so. Such courses are often viewed as stepping stones to other careers – in political science typically law or consulting – but not necessarily a source of useful skills or practical everyday value. In my mind, this is unfortunate. Ideally, coursework should provide knowledge, a broader set of skills for applying it, and crucially *confidence in doing so in the real world*. Two teaching positions I held prior to graduate school crystallized this concept for me: my work as a teaching assistant for a Portuguese language class and in my university’s jewelry studio. In both cases, the goal was to teach students with no prior knowledge how to confidently (and in the jewelry studio safely) apply what they learned to real life scenarios – the former in a Freshmen summer semester trip to Brazil and the latter to crafting their own projects. These courses taught me the importance of not only highlighting for students how the skills they learn can be useful for their day-to-day, but giving them the confidence to do so.

I believe that applying this lesson to coursework in the social sciences involves providing students with substantive and methodological tools to make them good consumers and producers of research. They should be able to confidently critique the claims and projects of others, while also being able to devise a strategy for researching and defending their own. Although few will ever need to write formal research papers, the ability to intelligently consume and evaluate other’s research, as well as to formulate ways to answer important empirical questions are critical in all fields. As such, I try to integrate the basics of research design into all of my teaching. One of the best examples of a course in which I applied this philosophy was an introductory course in comparative political economy at the Higher School of Economics (HSE) in Russia, which I co-taught three times. Substantively, the goal was to introduce advanced undergraduates and masters students to Western political economy. Methodologically, however, we devoted several weeks to basic causal inference and best practices for qualitative and quantitative research. We reinforced these lessons with a series of short reviews of contemporary research papers assigned as part of the course reading. By showing students they could make good critiques even of published research, we wanted to build their confidence in evaluating others’ arguments and claims. The culmination of the course was to apply what they learned to an original research paper or project proposal, which I helped students to develop on a one-to-one basis. Taken together, these steps helped students to unify the substantive knowledge they gained with both useful skills and the confidence to deploy them.

Another example of my commitment to empowering students to be good producers and consumers of research can be seen in my work helping students develop original research. The best example of this is my work on the International Center for the Study of Institutions and Development’s (ICSID) annual junior grant program. The program is designed to allow students from the Higher School of Economics (HSE) to work with ICSID’s foreign researchers on an original research project to be published in an international journal or HSE’s English language working paper series. The goal is to simultaneously help students to develop the skills needed to do good research, while also exposing them to Western practice and standards. For three of the last four years, I have participated in the program and supervised projects related to public goods provision, social policy in Russia’s regions, and vocational education. In each case, I spent a great deal of time in one-on-one discussions with students in order to help them identify their research question, craft a research design to address it, carry out the study, and then to write-up their results. I found the experience difficult both because our program took an interdisciplinary approach – pulling in applications from economics, political science, sociology, and law – and because of the challenge of teaching Russian students with very different traditions and backgrounds from my own. Nonetheless, I found the experience extremely rewarding, particularly as I grew more comfortable working one-on-one with students and developed effective ways to teach students from other disciplines how to incorporate good theory and research design into their work. In addition to my work at HSE, I also spent time working with undergraduate students one-on-one in two of the courses I TA’d at Columbia: *Data Analysis and Statistics for Political Science Research* and *the Political Economy of Development*. Both courses required students to write shorter, empirical research papers and

were valuable for me in learning how to guide lower-level undergraduate students, particularly those from majors fields that with less emphasis on empirical methodologies.

Promoting students' critical thinking skills and ability to produce and evaluate research can also be promoted organically through more substantive courses. As a TA at Columbia, I often used discussion sections as a means of promoting this goal. Although much of our time was spent on discussing the basic arguments in reading assignments, I devoted considerable time to dissecting the theoretical logic of the arguments and the empirical data marshalled to support it. I have found that students are most engaged with material when they are equipped to critique it but that many feel intimidated by unfamiliar empirics (particularly quantitative material). One of the ways in which I tried empower students was to emphasize basic statistical literacy and an appreciation of basics of causal inference. In doing so, I helped students to feel more comfortable pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of both the quantitative and qualitative research methodologies that figured in their reading assignments in ways that were hopefully helpful beyond their courses. I also taught students to think about ways to address flaws, in order to help them learn to engage constructively with other's work and with the work of future colleagues. In all cases, I made sure to emphasize how such skills would be helpful in future careers, whether inside or outside the academy. At Columbia, I served as a TA for a wide variety of introductory and mid-level undergraduate courses in International Relations, Comparative Politics, Russian foreign policy, the political economy of development, and applied statistics.

Substantively, I would welcome teaching courses at any level on political economy, the politics of the post-communist countries, distributive politics, and/or the welfare state in a comparative perspective: my areas of substantive specialization. Aside from substantive knowledge, my teaching approach would heavily emphasize basic empirical literacy and would be geared towards helping students, particularly undergraduates, understand how to incorporate critiques of data and method into their evaluations of material. In an introductory undergraduate course, for example, I would want to dedicate a week or two to teaching basic research design and causal inference, as well as how to evaluate quantitative and qualitative data. I have found that small research papers (5 pages), as well as periodic written critiques of each week's material are particularly helpful in reinforcing these lessons and helping students to apply them. In more advanced or graduate level courses, I would continue to emphasize written critiques of reading materials, but also assign students more traditional research papers in close consultation with me.

In addition to substantive courses, I would also be eager to teach methodology, especially a more traditional quantitative course (at any level) on applied statistics. In keeping with my emphasis on providing students practical skills, my approach to such a course would heavily emphasize replication and ability to work with statistical packages on short, original projects based on open-source datasets. I would similarly be interested in teaching a broader course on research design including causal inference, project design, and best practices in mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) research. Such a course would equip students with skills to define and pursue their own research projects, whether inside or outside the academy. Finally, given my emphasis on methodological literacy, I would also welcome the opportunity to continue to supervise individual student research at both the undergraduate and graduate level. I would be particularly welcome an opportunity to teach an undergraduate or masters' thesis seminar or a graduate-level dissertation seminar.