Teaching Political Science is a rewarding undertaking. I often learn as much from my students as they learn from me, and I am appreciative for the opportunity to interact with such inquisitive minds. I have made some mistakes along the way. However, these mistakes have been a direct result of incorporating new and unconventional projects and ideas into each class. The lessons learned from these mistakes have formed the basis of my teaching philosophy. From these mistakes, I have learned that a class should not be a dispassionate, detached lecture hall. As an instructor of Political Science, this means that I must provide for my students a conceptual and theoretical basis for understanding political exchanges. I strongly believe in active learning, and I try to stress critical thinking and real-world applications of the theories and topics we discuss. I try to present empirical material to students in a way that they can integrate this information into their own life experience.

One of my greatest challenges in the classroom is trying to engage students who sometimes fail to see the interconnectedness for political and social institutions or who simply discount the necessity for a national and international community. I try to overcome this challenge not only in the manner in which I deliver my lectures, but also in the questions that shape the classroom discussions and, above all, in writing assignments. For example, to teach about poverty and inequality in America, I have to get students to understand the socio-political structuring of race, class, and gender in American politics. I often begin my classes with a discussion of current events which are related to our subject matter. I have found this exercise most useful when trying to illustrate the complexities of the public policy process and the way that socioeconomic status further complicates political responsiveness. Sometimes particular exercises do not turn out as planned. Encouraging students to engage in political debate has often meant that I have had to play referee between students with opposing ideological viewpoints. These debates, though, give me the opportunity to highlight how differences of opinion are good for public policy debates.

Ultimately, my goal is to not only help students develop an understanding of political phenomena, but to help them form empirically supported arguments for their political positions. This is a skill set that will carry them throughout their entire lives in other disciplines and career paths. When their time in the classroom ends, these skills become even more important, allowing these students to contribute to society even if their only engagement with the political sphere is at the ballot box.