

Teaching Statement
Claire Greenstein

My philosophy of teaching is based on the belief that although most of my students will pursue careers outside of political science, how they understand politics will shape their lives and our society. As a result, I strive to provide my students with the knowledge and support that they need to become thoughtful, informed citizens. I do this by structuring my classes so that students analyze politics through multiple theoretical lenses, develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and form opinions rooted in evidence and logic. My students, in turn, say that my classes equip them to better understand and examine the world around them—something that will serve them in any profession they choose. Also, in a world of ever-increasing globalization and automation, it is important to help students develop the interpersonal and creative problem-solving skills they will need in a job market that values adaptability and collaboration.

I am prepared and excited to teach these skills in introductory and upper-level courses across a wide range of subfields in political science. I have already designed and independently taught four different undergraduate courses: Introduction to Comparative Politics (Spring 2019), Government and Politics of Western Europe (Fall 2018), Politics of Central and Eastern Europe (Spring 2018, Fall 2014), and Introduction to European Politics (Spring 2015, Fall 2017), as well as one joint undergraduate and graduate class, Government and Politics of Germany (Fall 2019). This summer, I will teach two additional undergraduate courses, Politics of the European Union and Transatlantic Relations, at Georgia Tech's campus in Metz, France. I also spent six semesters as a teaching assistant, where I led three separate weekly recitation sections, designed tests and quizzes, covered lectures, and graded assignments for Politics of Central and Eastern Europe, Introduction to European Politics, Introduction to Comparative Politics, and Introduction to American Politics. My minors in international relations and methodology also enable me to teach introductory and advanced international relations courses at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, as well as undergraduate research methods courses. Finally, since my research focuses on human rights and transitional justice, two areas that are immediately relevant to students interested in social justice, I would be delighted to design classes on these topics to fit the department's needs.

I am prepared to teach all of these classes to a diverse student body. I have experience teaching first-semester freshmen up through master's students, as well as first-generation college students, international students, and students from less-privileged backgrounds, including students who identify as belonging to a racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, and/or gender minority group. I am comfortable teaching students who already have a great deal of knowledge about politics, and I am also comfortable teaching students who are making their first foray into the discipline.

In my experience, students are more willing to chase the abstract goals of improving creative thinking and problem-solving skills when they have a personal stake in the course material. In a discipline as diverse as political science, there is always room for students to explore their passions in a course. I help students find and make links between their personal interests and the class, because, no matter a student's level of academic preparedness or dedication, once students connect the course material to something they care about, they are better able to understand new ideas and apply political concepts to situations beyond the classroom.

One way I help students tie the class to their own lives and interests is by making class interactive and concrete. While lectures have a place in the classroom, I limit uninterrupted lectures to twenty minutes (the length of the average adult's attention span), and I intersperse lectures with activities requiring student involvement. I start every session with a quick review of the previous day's material, ask questions that guide students to link current events to the course, and hold share and pair sessions to let students process new information in class. I also make the material tangible by integrating my own research, which involved over a year of overseas fieldwork in many of the countries I cover in class. I help students understand the Eurocrisis by showing my photos of half-finished construction projects in Greece, make the postcommunist transition easier to understand by sharing stories told to me by former East German dissidents, and explain ethnic nationalism with illustrations from my interviews with lawyers in Croatia.

My commitment to having students take an active role in their own learning goes beyond involving them in the lecture portion of class. I use a variety of interactive instructional methods, including holding small and large group discussions, illustrating concepts via short simulations, and scheduling presentations where students teach material to each other. I make sure that activities and assignments have clear instructions, but I provide enough flexibility to let students learn through the lens of a topic that truly interests them. For example, the second paper prompt in my Introduction to Comparative Politics class asks students to choose a country rated partly free by Freedom House and to then suggest changes that could be made to two of their country's political institutions in order to improve that country's quality of democracy. The assignment is structured, but it also allows students to study issues they genuinely care about.

When possible, I give students assignments that extend or build upon work they completed earlier in the class. This forces students to keep up to date with the course material, builds their confidence by developing their expertise on a particular topic, and helps them learn how to break large projects into manageable pieces. For example, in order to help students in my Introduction to European Politics class understand the European Union, I gave each student an EU member state and had them complete assignments about their country's political landscape and its role in the EU. In addition to a final paper assignment, students made short blog posts responding to current events as if they were their country's leader, served as country experts in class discussions, and participated in a two-day simulation of the European Council, where they had to argue their country's positions and draft resolutions for future EU policies.

As seen in my course and instructor evaluations below, these methods resonate with students, who report that my classes and teaching style have helped them understand political structures, theories, and history. My evaluations also indicate that students leave my courses with a greater appreciation for and interest in global politics. Another recurring theme in students' comments is that my presentation style and emphasis on interactive learning kept them engaged for the full duration of the class. I have also had students tell me that they declared a political science or European studies major as a direct result of my class, that they were better able to understand material and complete assignments in other courses due to the concepts and time management techniques and writing skills they learned from me, and that they selected a specific study abroad program in order to further explore the subjects and regions covered in my course.

Below, I present selected student evaluations from my Introduction to Comparative Politics class, which is the most recent course that I have taught independently. Full evaluations from this class and all other classes are available upon request.

Instructor Ratings, Introduction to Comparative Politics, Spring 2019

	Median
Clarity	5
Communicated how to succeed	4.9
Respect for students	5
Enthusiasm	5
Stimulates interest	4.8
Availability	4.9
Feedback helpfulness	4.8
Overall effectiveness	4.9

Scale of 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). 20/23 responded.

Course Ratings, Introduction to Comparative Politics, Spring 2019

	Median
Amount learned	4.3
Assignments facilitated learning	4.4
Assignments measured knowledge	4.6
Overall Effectiveness	4.6

Scale of 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). 20/23 responded.

Course Feedback

- Very strong lectures and assignments that really facilitated the learning.
- Honestly she's an amazing teacher—one of the best I've had at this school. I have nothing but nice things to say.
- Dr. Greenstein was so helpful when it came to making herself available to students for assistance. Her feedback really helped me on my essays. Her patience is much appreciated and it made me feel comfortable to ask questions.
- The professor did an amazing job responding to her students. Office hours were very helpful and it was obvious she wanted you to succeed.
- She doesn't just lecture, but she also constantly asks questions to get feedback from the class. It was a very 2-way interaction we had in this class!
- Professor interest and enthusiasm for this course were through the roof which helped me take in interest in the material as well.
- Dr. Greenstein is a very engaging and thoughtful teacher. I really enjoyed the lecture/discussion combo of the class. I think this is in the top two INTA classes I've taken so far at Tech
- In class activities were fun and the professor is extremely kind
- The instructor was very helpful and understanding, and it was clear when we had class discussions that she was passionate about the subjects.