Teaching Statement

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My teaching interests are tightly connected to my research background. I would be eager to offer substantive courses on comparative politics, authoritarian politics and democratization, public policy, domestic Chinese politics and comparative political communication. I would also be interested in teaching courses on quantitative research methods, survey and experiments, and research design classes at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

My philosophy of teaching is mainly developed from my two sources of experience. When I was an undergraduate student of journalism in China, one of my professors has repeatedly told us about two important lessons: 1) to always carry social responsibility, and 2) to always be prepared to learn new ideas. Since then, teaching has become an important career motive for me to pursue graduate-level studies. During my graduate programs in UC Berkley and in Syracuse, I learned to engage students in analyzing research projects both critically and sympathetically. I also developed my teaching skills through working five and a half years as a teaching assistant. I have led sessions for ten semesters (two in Berkeley and eight in Syracuse) and taught a class independently in summer 2018.

Here are the key points of my teaching philosophy.

First, I believe that the primary goal of contemporary university-level education is to train students for active learning. When I teach classes that focus on one discipline or one subfield of political science, I am not satisfied by only delivering the theories to students. I also deliver the learning methods via talking about the theories. For each class I taught as an instructor or as a teaching assistant, I made this goal very clear to students. I also merged this goal into introducing theories about political science. When I was a teaching assistant for the Introduction to Comparative Politics, I needed to review the major theories of democratization. I designed two particular activities to engage them into active learning. When I went through each theory, I broke down it into three parts: the research question, the argument and argumentation (including evidence). I asked a series of questions to elicit the students' answers. I guided them to organize their thoughts into these three parts accordingly. I repeated this process in all theories to enhance their understanding. I successfully led them to paraphrase the theories by themselves. Moreover, after we talked about multiple theories, I guided the students to connect them into a systematic structure – how these theories are having dialogues with each other. For instance, I introduced which theories can be categorized into " economic arguments" and how they differ and which theories assume a structural argument and which one proposes the importance of political

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actors. I usually outline the theories on the blackboard so that the relations between different authors could be visualized. I also encourage students to learn by downplaying the role of one "correct answer". I remind them no answer is perfect, especially in social science world. Rather than giving them direct answer, I discuss with them what the procedure of analysis would be. Other than teaching the class materials, I also like to share my experience of study to students, including introducing software to facilitate knowledge management and note taking. I hope the students can understand the methods we use to learn are more important than the answers we learn, because learning is a never-ending process for life.

Second, I emphasize that the learning environment should be cooperative. In the beginning of every class, I encourage students to find their own study group. In my class, I design a lot of group exercises. I assign their groups randomly on purpose so that they can get used to communicating with strangers. In my Comparative Politics class, I asked students to present their notes (review the lecture content) every week not only for engaging them into active learning, but also for sharing their notes with their classmates. In this way, we created a collaborative learning atmosphere. After their presentations, I also gave them suggestions on their communication skills. This is the important source to prepare them into future civic engagement. Based on teaching evaluations, students also loved the group work in my Political Analysis class.

Lastly, I like to have a relatively equal relation with my students. I tried hard to avoid "dictator-in-the-classroom" style of teaching. Being a teacher does not mean knowing everything. I like them to question my answer and discuss with me what answer is more appropriate. I am always ready to admit "I don't know" in the class. On the other hand, as a scholar of public opinion and Internet politics, I realize how important it is that educated citizens can have reliable judgments about the opinions floating around the media environment. I encourage their participation into the discussion by "playing the fool".In Comparative Politics, I intentionally gave them a wrong answer at first to see their response. I tease their belief of democracy by sharing how the Chinese government criticize the human rights of the United States, so that they need to think about what the legitimate rebuttals can be. To me, teaching is not the task of enlightening those who do not know, but experience exchange among learners. Teaching is not a single-dimensional communication, but a collaborative work between teachers and students to climb up to a higher mountain. In the class, I hope to show them even as a teacher, I am not master but the humble servant of knowledge. My goal is to motivate students to learn more when leaving the classroom.