

Political Science 5702
Teaching Political Science
Dr. Todd Makse
Fall 2021

Class Meetings: Fridays 10:00am-11:30am (until October 29 only) in SIPA 502
Office Hours: Thursday 12:30-1:30pm (on Zoom) and Friday 12:00pm-1:00pm (in person)
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Course Description:

This course is designed to provide graduate students with the basic skills and techniques necessary for effective teaching in political science and international relations. Topics will include course preparation, learning, preparation of course syllabi, testing and grading, mentoring, and professional ethics. By the end of the semester, students should be able to present a short and effective lecture, understand various learning styles and ways to cater to them, contemplate appropriate techniques for testing and grading, and be familiar with important academic policies.

Most of our time in class will be spent discussing competing perspectives on teaching, and in many cases, there are no right answers, just differing teaching philosophies. Do not feel the need to come to any conclusions about teaching by the end of the semester but do continue to think between now and the time you teach your first solo class. I encourage you to get into the habit of reading other resources on teaching, including teaching columns from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and the pedagogy section of *PS: Politics and Political Science*.

Textbook and Readings

Davis, Barbara Gross. 2009. *Tools for Teaching*, 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

A handful of additional readings will be provided on Canvas.

Grading components:

Reflection on teaching 10%

Classroom observation report 25%

Mini lecture 50% (includes lesson plan, exam questions, activity design, and peer critiques)

Participation 15%

The grading scale for final grades will be as follows:

93-100 A	90-92 A-	87-89 B+	83-86 B	80-82 B-
77-79 C+	70-76 C	60-69 D	59 and below F	

Grading criteria:

Reflection on Teaching: You will write a short paper (500 words) paper reflecting on what you think makes a good teacher, identifying positive qualities you have observed in your past teachers, and beginning to develop your own philosophy of teaching. **This assignment is due, via email, by September 2 (the night before class).**

Classroom Observation Report: The purpose of this assignment is to observe different classes, instructional styles, student behavior and learning, physical space issues, and resources or tools used for teaching. You should seek out professors in the department (full-time faculty only) and ask for permission to observe their classes. The three classroom observations should include a mix of different professors, subject matters, and levels (i.e. introductory vs. upper level). On the day of class, arrive early and sit in a location where you can observe the entire class. Remember, you are not a participant in the class; you do not need to take notes from the lecture. Focus instead on the professor's style, student engagement and involvement, the use of space in the room, and the effectiveness of visual stimuli and technology. **Your observation report is due by October 1.** See the questionnaire on Canvas for more detail.

Mini-Lecture: You will prepare a fifteen-minute mini-lecture that you will deliver in class during the last week(s) of class. During the first two weeks of class, you should talk with your supervising professor and select a topic. Throughout the semester, you should continue gathering resources, preparing notes and an outline, and consulting with your supervising professor on the substance of the material in your lecture. For the presentation itself, you should be guided by strategies for lecture design and classroom management we discuss in class. Complete instructions and a rubric for the assignment can be found at the end of the syllabus.

As part of the mini-lecture assignment, you will also submit the following:

Lesson Plan: You will submit a one-page memo indicating the topic and goals of your lecture before you begin preparations (see the end of the syllabus for specifics). **This assignment will be due, via email, by September 17.**

Exam Questions: You will develop a short set of test questions (and an answer key) that you might put on an exam regarding the material in your lecture. Your test questions should include three different question formats (e.g. multiple choice, short answer, etc.) Each question format should include clear instructions on how students should answer the question. **This assignment will be due, via email, by October 8.**

Classroom activity design: You will design an active learning lesson plan on the same topic as your mini-lecture; imagine that this activity and the mini-lecture would comprise the lesson plan for one class session. **This assignment will be due, via email, by October 15.** The materials should include a set of instructions to be provided to students and any other materials required for the activity.

Peer Critiques: Each student will also provide written feedback (constructive criticism and praise) for two of your classmates' mini lectures (and test questions). You must provide this feedback to both the presenter and to me, via email, within one week of the lecture.

Participation: You are expected to participate in class discussions on a regular basis. Obviously, you must also be present to participate. You have one "free" absence. Additional absences will result in deductions from your participation grade. Absences are excused if you provide documentation of a serious medical condition that precludes attendance. Absences for religious holidays will also be deemed excused absences; please inform me in advance if you plan to miss any classes for this reason.

Class Policies:

Academic Misconduct: Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and to honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook. Violations include cheating, plagiarism, academic negligence or dishonesty. Plagiarism results when students neglect to acknowledge in footnotes, endnotes or other forms of documentation their use of the words and ideas of others. If you have questions about what constitutes proper citation, please speak to me.

Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities, as defined by law, have the right to receive appropriate accommodations if their disabilities make it difficult to perform academic tasks in the usual way or in the allotted time frame. However, in order to receive accommodation, students with disabilities must register with the Disability Resource Center. This office will keep the student's written request, notify faculty who have a student with a disability enrolled in his or her class, and indicate what kinds of arrangements should be made. Please contact the DRC at the beginning of the semester.

Availability: Students should feel free to contact me by email with any concerns about the class or course material. I will make every effort to respond to all messages within 24 hours. Please send emails through your FIU email and check your FIU email daily.

Schedule for Class Topics, Readings and Assignments

August 27: Class Introduction; Syllabus Design

Readings: Davis, Chapters 1-8

September 3: Class Policies and Materials

Reflection on teaching due September 2

Readings: FIU syllabus policy and faculty handbook, Section VI

September 10: Learning Outcomes and Learning Styles

Readings: Davis, Chapters 29-33

September 17: Lecture, Participation and Class Discussion

Lesson plan due

Readings: Davis, Chapters 9-19, 45-51

September 24: Testing and Grading

Readings: Davis, Chapters 38-44; "Seven Criteria for the Technical Quality of a Test"

October 1: NO CLASS (APSA)

Classroom observation reports due

October 8: Active Learning

Exam questions due

Readings: Davis, Chapters 20-25, 34-37

October 15: Writing Assignments; Responding to Feedback

Active learning activity due

Readings: SPOTs materials

October 22 and 29: Mini-Lectures

Mini-Lecture Guidelines

The Lesson Plan

Your goal is to develop a lesson plan that teaches **one concept**¹ to students through a 15-minute mini lecture and an accompanying active learning lesson plan that would take up the remaining class time (either 35 or 60 minutes) in a single class session. You need to make the following decisions about the lesson plan and answer these questions in the memo due on September 17:

*What course will this take place in? (It should be a course that exists at FIU.)

*When in the semester will it occur? Is this part of a specific thematic section of the course? What material would have been covered in the class session(s) immediately prior to this lesson?

*What concepts/material should the student already know prior to the delivery of this lecture?

You are welcome to adjust the scope or organization of the lesson plan in response to my feedback or concerns that arise throughout the writing process. You will provide a final version of this document to your peers on the day of your presentation. However, since your exam questions and active learning activity will also be based on the lesson plan, there should be no major changes to the topic after October 1.

The Presentation

Presentations will occur on October 22 and 29. A total of thirty minutes will be allotted for each student, so class may go as late as 12:30pm on those days (depending on class enrollment). After the lecture portion is over, there will be time for feedback and to discuss how the lecture ties in with the active learning portion of the lesson plans. The following are some guidelines for your lecture:

Exposition: Your memo should help situate your peers, so when you begin, you should begin “in character” (i.e. as if you were speaking to the class in the context described in your memo). Make clear to the students what you hope to accomplish in this lesson.

Synthesis: Your lecture should include call-backs to material covered earlier in the fictional semester and reinforce concepts already covered, as appropriate. The transition between lecture and the active learning should be seamless. At the end of the lecture, give a brief lead-in explain how the activity relates to the day’s lecture material and what the activity is meant to accomplish (this will not count toward your 15 minutes), but we will not actually do the activity.

Interaction: You can incorporate some interaction with students but take one response from your audience and move on. Most of the fifteen minutes should be spent presenting, not interacting. (Likewise, when you’re an audience member, don’t ask questions or sidetrack the presenter.)

Presentation: Make eye contact with students. Having notes is fine but be inconspicuous and never read from your notes or the slides verbatim (unless it’s a quote). Know your material. If you mention names or use terms, know how to pronounce them or what they mean.

¹ Even if your approach to the course is rooted in historical analysis, avoid making the lecture solely about the recitation of facts or description of events. The central takeaway from the class should be an understanding of a theory or set of concepts in political science or international relations.

Rehearse: Please practice giving your lecture at least once. One of the most challenging things about developing lesson plans is estimating how long it will take to cover the material. I have had students go as short as 7-8 minutes or get to 20 minutes with several slides unfinished. (I'll have to stop you at 20 minutes).

Visuals: Your lecture should be accompanied by a Powerpoint. Slides should not be cluttered with text and should include some visuals (tables, maps, images). There should be no more than 50 words on a slide and font size should be 24-pt or larger. Oral and visual components should complement (not duplicate) one another. For example, if your slide has a list of names, just point to the list and summarize it; don't read the entire list.

Grading Rubric for Mini Lectures

Grading Criterion	5	4	3	2	1	0
<i>Lecture Content</i>						
Material contextualized in overall course narrative						
Demonstrates subject matter expertise						
Presents topics with a coherent narrative						
Provides clear definitions and examples of key concepts						
Prepares students suitably for submitted exam questions						
Strong synthesis with active learning activity						
<i>Visuals</i>						
Conveys ideas in text and non-text components						
Follows formatting guidelines and uses space efficiently						
Complements lecture and aids visual learners						
<i>Oral Presentation</i>						
Engages students consistently						
Allocates time effectively and paces evenly						
Delivery appears rehearsed and prepared						

Total points (out of 60):

Grade:

Grading Scale for individual items:

5 = Excellent; 4 = Above Average; 3 = Average; 2 = Below Average;

1 = Unsatisfactory; 0 = Not Completed

53-60 = A

50-52 = A-

47-49 = B+

43-46 = B

40-42 = B-

30-39 = C

20-29 = D

Below 20 = F