**Course Expectations & Guidelines**

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Hi, I’m looking forward to working with you all this semester. This document outlines my expectations for student conduct in the course, as well as my general teaching philosophy.

**Teaching Style and Learning Goals**

Teaching has been the singular joy of my academic career. I consider it an honor to explore the field of political science with you and your colleagues.

I expect a great deal from my students, because I truly believe that every person I teach has the ability to master the material given sufficient dedication, personal effort (on both our parts), and communication. When you sign up for my class, you are making a commitment to complete all assignments (participation, readings, papers, exams, etc.) to the best of your ability, and I will hold you to that promise. But in return, I will provide all appropriate assistance – both within class and outside – to help you understand the material. Moreover, I am happy to adapt my teaching approach to accommodate your needs. Please feel free to ask me questions, and I encourage you to draw upon your colleagues – who will be a life-long resource – for support as well.

In this course, we will explore many different issues of theoretical, empirical, and policy importance. But most of all, this course is designed to teach you how to think analytically. Most of the facts presented here, and even some of the theories, will fade from your knowledge with time. But understanding how to relate fact to theory to argument, being able to identify empirical or theoretical gaps, and knowing how to present your claims in a coherent, persuasive manner: those are my key teaching goals, as they are the skills most highly sought after in almost every profession requiring a college degree.

**Communication, Logistics, and Conduct**

In the private and public sector, good communication and logistics are essential. This class will be no different. If you ever have a question about my protocols, adopt a corporate standard. That is, act as if you were in a professional environment, which, in fact, you are. Also, please read [this article](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2016/05/03/7-things-new-college-students-need-to-know-so-they-dont-drive-professors-crazy/) for basic etiquette in a college setting.

Thoroughly read all the e-mails I send to you. Short ones are just as important as long ones. I have had a number of students who failed to read a two-line e-mail, causing large problems for themselves. I will clearly let you know when an e-mail is optional. Also, just to be certain, make sure that both Blackboard and my e-mail address are added to the exceptions list by your junk mail blocker (the university probably does this already).

E-mail is also the best way to reach me. **Please start the subject line of your e-mail with the course number and include the purpose of the e-mail in the subject line***.* I will do my best to respond to your questions within 24-48 hours.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns you may have. Most of your colleagues are approaching this material for the first time, and if you have a question, it’s highly likely that others do as well. In addition, you may find it helpful to start a discussion thread on Blackboard so that other students can also benefit from your questions.

The corporate standard also applies to classroom decorum. Any behavior that wouldn’t be allowed in a business meeting will not be allowed in the classroom. In particular, this means no phone calls or texting.

Laptops are allowed in class, but you may not use it for recreational purposes (e.g. checking e-mail, Facebook, web browsing, etc.). Doing so inhibits your contribution to the collective discussion and distracts anyone in view. If this becomes a major issue, I will ban electronic devices from the course.

**Class Expectations and Conduct**

I love teaching: it is one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve ever had. I love seeing my students engage with the world through new frameworks and know that I made a concrete contribution to their education. As such, I push for my students whenever possible and will work with you on any issue you want to address. But because of that, I expect my students to work hard and contribute to every class and the course more generally. Here is what I expect of my students:

*Attendance*: In order to participate, you must attend. On-time attendance at all classes is **mandatory**. You should get my approval by e-mail (at least 24 hours in advance except in case of family emergency or illness) for any absences. In the case of excused absences, I will need to see a doctor’s note or similar validation for your absence.

*Discussion*: The class will focus on discussion with some occasional lecture. You are expected to contribute productively to each and every class discussion. Quality interventions demonstrate that you have grappled with the assigned texts before coming to class (e.g. by referring to the readings in your comments) and that you have been listening to your classmates (e.g. by acknowledging their contributions). This is true whether you agree or disagree: Vigorous disagreement is very important in the academic world and is likely to occur given the controversial nature of the arguments we will encounter. It is therefore strongly encouraged that you respond to what your classmates are saying, whether you are in agreement with them or could not disagree more with them. Ideally, the class will run as an active and respectful dialogue between all of us, not as a series of monologues where everyone addresses the class.

Asking good questions also counts as participation. If you feel confused or lost, you are very likely not the only one. You will do everyone a favor if you jump in and ask a question.

If you have difficulty with public speaking, please come see me, so we can discuss strategies to help you get more comfortable with commenting in class. Remember that if you hear yourself speak just one time during the first session it will be far easier to speak for the rest of the semester. Confident, public speaking is also an incredibly important skill in the modern workplace. Remember: you are your best and sometimes only advocate for professional advancement. Getting some practice in now can be very helpful for the future.

In addition, I occasionally adopt the “cold calling” method common to business and law schools. That is, I will periodically ask you questions to clarify points in the reading, offer your thoughts on a particular decision, or take informal polls of the class. Public speaking – particularly extemporaneously and within large groups – is a critical skill in the job market and in life, and I hope to give all my students an opportunity to participate in this way.

*Reading Assignments*:Much of our discussion in class will be text-based (that is, we will be citing specific passages to support our arguments), so you must be familiar with the relevant material. To this end, I encourage you to prepare a “cheat sheet” (approx. 1 page) for each assigned reading, very succinctly summarizing the main points of each text. I encourage you to form study groups for this purpose, but they are not a substitute for reading the material yourself.

**I have also posted two documents on Blackboard to help you engage with theoretical and history-based books and articles**. I highly encourage you to read these pieces, as they will help to focus your reading and cut down the workload. In addition, please feel free to come speak with me if you are having trouble with certain pieces or the readings overall.

Classes quickly become uncomfortable and unproductive when no one has done the week’s assignments. If this situation persists, I will cold call at random to stimulate discussion or provide an opportunity for students to ask their own questions. In addition, in my last course, I was praised for my use of the “gotcha” question. While immensely entertaining for me, I imagine it is not quite as fun for my students.

*Papers*: I have posted citation, formatting, and style guidelines on Blackboard. Please be sure to review and follow these documents, as they will improve your writing.

*Deadlines*: One of my biggest annoyances is when students miss deadlines. Meeting deadlines is a basic skill that you will need in any career (including academics), and in my past career, I have in fact fired employees who consistently failed to fulfill this task.

The penalty for late submission is a third of a grade (i.e. A 🡪 A-) for **every 20 minutes** or any part thereof a paper is late.

**Social Media**

While I maintain a limited presence on social media, I prefer to keep it separate from my academic life. Moreover, I am a little old-fashioned when it comes to developing a social network, and won’t friend anyone who I don’t actually know as a friend. Finally, if we do become friends through the course of this class or some other interaction, I maintain a firm policy of not linking to anyone until after they have graduated to avoid both the appearance and fact of giving some students an unfair advantage compared to their colleagues.

As a result, please do not try to connect with me on Facebook or LinkedIn, at least until after you graduate.

**About Me**

*Education* Ph.D., Princeton University, 2014: Politics

 MA, Princeton University, 2010: Politics

 MSc, London School of Economics, 2004: International Relations

BA, Wesleyan University, 2001: College of Social Studies

*Professional* University at Albany, SUNY, 2014-2015: Assistant Professor of Political Science

 National Democratic Institute, 2005-2008: Program Officer

 United Nations, Dept. of Political Affairs, 2004: Consultant

Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan, 2001-2003: Foreign Policy Analyst

*Other*  Revenue Watch Institute, 2008

International Center for Transitional Justice, 2008

Institute for International Education, 2005

Center of Asian American Children and Families, 2003

 Taipei Times, 2001-2

In the past I have conducted discussions with small groups of students on possible careers in politics and foreign policy. I have also asked colleagues with experience in law, military, and government to attend as well. Please feel free to contact me if you have any interest in this.

I’m looking forward to working with you!