

Teaching Statement

Dotan A. Haim

I have two main goals as a teacher. First, I seek to help students develop their critical thinking skills by recognizing key logic chains in an argument, identifying potential weak points, and thinking about ways to test their hypotheses. Second, I aim to give focused attention to cultivating students' oral and written communication skills.

I believe that healthy skepticism is one of the most transferable skills that social scientists are in a position to teach. The substantive fields of political science are united by their efforts to untangle complex concepts and unpack causal claims. Developing these skills is important for students who will go on to a wide range of professions. As a former debater and philosophy student, I have always been fascinated by the puzzle of breaking down an argument into its constituent parts and thinking about how that argument could be improved and tested. As a teacher, I enjoy sharing my enthusiasm for these puzzles with students while helping them to develop their own toolbox of critical thinking skills.

In substantive courses in International Relations and Comparative Politics, I think it is crucial to first find aspects of the material that are applicable to real world problems of interest to the students. By presenting different ways of thinking about these problems and challenging conventional wisdom, the course material can then serve as a vehicle for learning how to better analyze arguments more generally. Helping students develop the ability to dig beyond the surface, think creatively, and communicate ideas in their own voice is one of the most rewarding aspects of a career in academia. My teaching evaluations are included below. I am proud that they reflect my enthusiasm for teaching and my ability to clearly present complex ideas in a way that inspires students to take an interest in the course material.

I am committed to the idea that it is essential for students to have consistent practice communicating their ideas in a low-pressure setting, combined with regular feedback from both peers and the instructor. When I teach, I make time during each class for students to present their understanding of an issue to a small group of their peers. In addition, I assign students small writing assignments or data exercises at regular intervals, have them read each others' anonymized work, and provide each other with detailed feedback. As the instructor, I dedicate significant time to reading students' drafts and giving them in-depth comments that they can use to improve their writing in later versions. I feel that University settings often under-emphasize the value incorporating feedback into repeated drafts of a single assignment. Including students' peers in the learning process gives them the opportunity to both give and receive consistent feedback, helping them improve writing and data competencies that will travel beyond the classroom. I look forward to expanding my teaching skills to better incorporate the peer-learning pedagogy as my career continues.

I am interested in teaching a variety of courses in International Relations, Comparative Politics, and Research Methodology as departmental needs arise. My expertise in civil conflict and insurgency will allow me to teach topical courses that also draw on my extensive experience conducting research in the field. In addition, I would like to offer courses on network methods, big data, and survey design that will give students cutting-edge skills that are applicable to careers inside and outside of academia. I am enthusiastic about contributing to the academic community as both a teacher and a mentor, and I look forward to continuing these activities as a faculty member.

Example Course Offerings

International Relations

- Insurgency and Terrorism
- Civil Conflict
- International Security
- International Political Economy
- Introduction to International Relations

Comparative Politics

- Politics of Southeast Asia
- Politics of the Middle East
- Social Movements and Revolution
- Introduction to Comparative Politics

Methodology

- Social Networks
- Big Data and Computational Social Science
- Experiments in Social Science

Below are a summary of selected teaching evaluations and student comments for classes I have recently taught.

UCSD, Winter Quarter 2015: Section-Leading TA for Ethics and Society: Politics of Revolution, lectured by John LeJeune

| Question | Proportion for Each Score | | | | | Mean |
|---|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Genuinely interested in and enthusiastic about teaching. | 0 | 0 | 0 | .18 | .82 | 4.82 |
| Presented course material clearly and answered questions accurately in class. | 0 | 0 | 0 | .31 | .69 | 4.69 |
| Helped develop my thinking skills on the subject. | 0 | 0 | .03 | .34 | .62 | 4.48 |
| Accessible to students outside of class | 0 | .04 | 0 | .23 | .73 | 4.57 |
| Answered questions clearly and effectively | 0 | 0 | 0 | .41 | .59 | 4.58 |
| Well organized and prepared for class | 0 | 0 | 0 | .38 | .62 | 4.62 |
| I would recommend TA to other students. | 0 | 0 | 0 | .14 | .86 | 4.86 |
| Average | | | | | | 4.67 |

Selected Student Comments

- He's very nice and approachable. He cares about students and their learning. He is very respectful of everyone in the class. He does his best to get everyone involved, while also understanding people's shyness. He understands the course material well and does a really good job of answering and promoting questions without giving out the answers. He tries to understand everyone's opinions and view points and never makes negative judgments or comments.
- He is friendly, makes the course more interesting, and offers insightful comments.
- He was a great TA. He was the reason why I actually liked the class. He's a great person. He's very likable. You can tell he spends a great deal of time reading people's papers and actually tries to understand people's positions and keeps an open mind to all sorts of view points. I would recommend him to anyone.
- Always excited about material
- I liked how he mixed up how the section was run doing one big group discussion, small groups discussion, and even having a debate. Made discussion more interesting since it was not the same repetitive routine every week. Also it helped me since I don't really like talking in big groups, but after participating in smaller groups it made me more comfortable to speak up in front of the whole class. I also really enjoyed the his enthusiasm. He definitely showed that he was interested in the subject and interested in our opinions and that fostered an environment where I felt got the students more interested and talkative.
- clearly described and explained things
- He delves into the topics and really makes you think, forcing you to choose sides and back you arguement. In this way, he beneficially supplements lecture material, sometimes to the point of becoming more useful. I understood the real difficulties in the characters' ethical decisions after he thoroughly explained both sides of the argument
- Easily approachable.
- During section, facilitated constructive discussion on class material. During office hours, encouraged critical thinking for essay content and readings
- He was inclusive and interactive during discussion.
- He's always seems interested in the topics that we talk about and always seems excited for discussion. He's a happy person and I enjoyed going to section because of that and that made me want to learn more about the material.

- Really enjoyed how he broke down concepts in a way that was easy for us science/engineering majors to understand, even though it's so far outside our comfort zone! Also very helpful when discussing paper ideas
- The discussion time he led was interesting and helpful for class paper.
- Very friendly, open, and creates a comfortable environment.
- Very helpful in promoting meaningful discussions and encouraging participation; very knowledgeable about course material; unique ideas for discussion topics
- Highly recommend him!