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TEACHING STATEMENT

During my postgraduate career at George Washington University, I have sought multiple opportunities to gain teaching experience. Although my fellowship did not require that I act as a teaching assistant, I arranged to TA in the political science department for a large undergraduate lecture course on U.S. welfare policy ("Poverty, Work, and Welfare"). In the summer of both 2018 and 2019, I taught on my own a smaller section of the same course, which enrolls primarily sophomores. In this teaching statement, I detail my teaching philosophy, future goals, commitment to diversity and inclusion, and provide a summary of previous teaching evaluations.

Teaching Philosophy

Three principles guide my teaching philosophy. *The first principle*: learning requires that each student be treated with dignity and respect, but we must not shy away from difficult truths. Instructors and students should approach sensitive material thoughtfully, inclusively, and without disrespecting others or varying points of view. But those discussions should not avoid social and political realities; otherwise, it will compromise students' ability to learn effectively. For instance when teaching students about the politics of welfare, I use the insidious origins of the "welfare queen" trope, the "spillover" of immigration attitudes for public opinion toward welfare, and other examples to demonstrate the long-standing connection between race and welfare policy in the United States. Throughout, I emphasize that the studies discussed in class are a matter of social science investigation with real-world implications and ensure that I am careful with my words, in order to avoid alienating any students.

The second principle: especially in the social sciences, it is vital that course content be relevant to the world that students observe in their daily life. Theories need to be grounded in the real world and current events, and pedagogical research on lecture framing demonstrates that this strategy promotes learning. Real-world grounding helps students to process the material and understand its implications. In my social policy course, I combine lessons on theory with policy details and personal stories of program recipients. For example, I assign students an excerpt from Jamila Michener's *Fragmented Democracy*, in which she describes her interviews with actual Medicaid beneficiaries. That gives students a clear understanding of how Medicaid affects people's lives, which allows for an engaging conversation about other more abstract concepts, such as the details of Medicaid policy, theories of federalism, and the relationship between the federal government and state policymaking.

One main learning objective for Poverty, Work, and Welfare is that students should be able to evaluate the U.S. welfare state and develop their own ideas for how to best reform it. For example, when I taught the course in the summer of 2019, I had each student research a different social policy proposal from a 2020 Democratic presidential candidate. The assignment required students to identify deficiencies in the welfare state and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these policy proposals in a brief memo and then present their research to the class.

The third principle: stay up to date with the most recent innovations in teaching. First, technology can be valuable. Quizzes and exams can be conducted online (via software such as Blackboard or Canvas) to save time in class. Virtual discussion boards allow students to interact with and learn from each other, even if they are nervous to participate during class. In my classes, I try to create an engaging experience by showing news clips and "explainer" videos, and occasionally assign podcast episodes from the Scholars Strategy Network's *No Jargon Podcast* as recommended readings. I have used multi-media presentations to show students how eligible Americans would go about applying for complicated programs like Medicare or show them the specific regulations that the Social Security Administration uses to determine whether applicants qualify for disability benefits.

Second, students have different learning styles, and it is important to provide for a variety of in-class experiences and assignments. The course that I developed combines discussion, student presentations, lectures, multiple choice quizzes, short and long writing assignments, as well as exams. For written assignments, I make my expectations clear through the use of grading rubrics that I provide to students before the assignment due date.

Goals for Future Teaching Development
In the future, I look forward to being able to continue to adapt my courses to make them as engaging as possible. In both 2018 and 2019, I attended the Teaching and Learning Conference at APSA's annual meeting and participated in workshops on the latest political science teaching strategies. I plan to continue to attend similar conferences and stay up to date with the latest research on teaching pedagogy. In particular, I want to find new opportunities for hands-on learning in my classes and develop in-class activities that require students to work in groups.

Furthermore, I especially look forward to being able to mentor and advise students, something that I have not had the opportunity to do thus far in my academic career. However, when I did teach independently, class sizes were small; therefore, I was able to get to know my students individually and provide them with individual attention as needed. I hope to more formally mentor and advise students as a faculty member. When I was an undergraduate, writing a senior thesis and acting as an undergraduate research assistant for faculty research projects were formative experiences for me, which helped me to realize my passion for political science. Understanding how valuable these experiences can be for students, I am passionate about supervising these activities as a faculty member.

Diversity and Inclusion
As a scholar of social and economic inequality, I am well aware of the importance of higher education in upward mobility, and I have experience teaching students from a variety of racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. When teaching, I make sure to be aware of the diverse experiences of my students. For example, I frequently try to integrate pop culture references and American idiomatic expressions into my lectures, but I do not overuse them, since these references can be alienating to second-language English speakers and international students unfamiliar with American culture. Furthermore, when teaching about racially sensitive topics during Poverty, Work, and Welfare, I warn students beforehand and always emphasize that the research discussed in class is a result of the scientific method—not wantonly incendiary opinions. As well, I have had experiences handling Title IX and Americans with Disabilities Act student accommodations. In these instances, I give as much flexibility as is possible and recommended by case managers and I am sure to never draw undue attention to the fact that these students receive accommodations during class.

My passion for diversity and inclusion extends outside of the classroom as well, since my scholarly research explores the intersection of social and economic inequality. In a review of social policy literature, my co-author and I note the demographic disparities in the reach of the welfare state. In an analysis of the consequences of economic inequality for representation, my co-author and I draw attention to the cultural divide within the Democratic Party—on issues like immigration, abortion, and same-sex marriage. The focus of my current research—corporate political activity on civil rights—examines the role of corporate economic power in identity-based social issues.

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Summary of Teaching Evaluations

The table below displays a selection of results from student evaluations. I can provide the complete report of evaluations upon request. Eight students enrolled in the course in summer 2018 and every student completed the evaluation. Twelve students enrolled in the course in summer 2019 and eight completed the evaluation.

	Maks-Solomon 2018	Maks-Solomon 2019	Department Average
How much students learned	4.0	4.6	4.3
Rating of lectures and presentations	4.6	4.5	4.3
Overall rating of instructor	4.2	4.8	4.5
Overall rating of course	4.2	4.2	4.3

How much students learned: On a scale from 1 (little) to 5 (a lot), students were asked how much they learned in the class. In 2018, 75% percent of students responded with a 4 or 5 on this question. In response to the fact that all students did not respond with a 4 or 5, I covered more content when I taught the course this past summer and used class time more effectively so I had time to cover the additional content. In 2019, 100% of students responded with a 4 or 5 to this question.

Rating of lectures and presentations: On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), students were asked if they agreed with the statement that lectures and presentations were effective. In both 2018 and 2019, all students responded with either a 4 or 5 to this statement.

Overall rating of instructor: On a scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent), students were asked about the overall quality of their instructor. In both 2018 and 2019, all students responded with either a 4 or 5 to this statement.

Overall rating of course: On a scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent), students were asked about the overall quality of the course. In 2018, 88% of students responded with a 4 or 5, but in 2019, 100% of students did so.

Written comments emphasized the practical implications of the course and the quality of lectures:
- "Cory was well prepared for the lectures. The essay requirement helped me understand more about very common welfare programs used in the U.S. His grading was fair too."
- "I liked that the professor took the time to make the lectures as upbeat as possible. It's a condensed course, so things have to stay moving. But he really kept the content engaging despite the long class periods."
- "I appreciated the quality and effort put into this class, especially the PowerPoints and presentations. Making sure we're [understanding course material] and he was giving us the correct information was a top priority and I really respect that."

In 2018, when asked what should be improved about the course, many students indicated that quizzes were too difficult. They also noted that they would like more discussion and less lecture. These two suggested changes were easy to implement the next time that I taught the course. In evaluations from this past summer, less students indicated that the quizzes were too hard and that there was too much lecture.