

Andrew Kerner-Teaching Statement

Undergraduate teaching has always been the central driver behind my academic career. I attended a teaching-oriented liberal arts school as an undergraduate and I became a professor to provide to others the same sort of committed, rigorous, supportive and careful teaching that was provided to me. That goal remains, and I believe that I have been able to achieve it. Students routinely rate my courses as among the most challenging *and* the most rewarding on offer.

Teaching Philosophy

I aim to teach courses that helps students identify and make sense of politics' systematic drivers. My courses tend to be theory-driven rather than case-driven. I want to familiarize students with theoretical frameworks that they can then use to understand more systematically the politics that they already observe. I particularly like to stress the way a few political features (an institutional design feature, for example) can exert analogous effects across a variety of topics and cases.

I also want students to appreciate empirical social science as means of improving knowledge about politics. My upper-level courses stress hypothesis testing and teach a variety of research design-related concepts. While not every political science student wants to learn about endogeneity or selection bias, I've learned how to provide intuitive and non-technical overviews of research design issues without getting too mired in technical detail.

The priority that I place on teaching students about theory and methods reflects my approach to political science as an academic discipline, but also my beliefs about the importance of analytical thinking to informed citizenship. My teaching philosophy is to a substantial degree focused on what happens *after* the course is over. The students I teach will, in big ways and small, go on to shape the political topics that I cover in class. I want them to do so thoughtfully. It is not enough that they be familiar with the underlying political dynamics, I want them to be equipped with theoretical and methodological insights that can help them assimilate new information as it arises. My courses are designed to equip them with the tools to do so.

Inclusivity and Diversity

We are all called to and challenged by the need to teach effectively across a diverse student body, but it affects me particularly because I teach courses on a topic—global financial politics—that is often considered an elite interest. It is certainly one in which class (and gender and nationality and race) bears heavily on students' prior exposure to the topic and their comfort in the classroom. Creating a classroom that is safe for all to explore the material is central to what I do.

Doing so begins with syllabus design. For example, the academic literature on finance typically treats financial development as an unalloyed good, and has a tendency to valorize financial motives and financial logic. I don't shy away from those works—they are the backbone of the literature, and much of that work is very good—but neither do I give it pride of place. Those works are balanced, and their logic questioned, both in classroom discussion and in countervailing works from political scientists and others. Providing an intellectually diverse syllabus, especially one that includes other-than-traditional voices, is an important first step towards providing a genuinely inclusive classroom environment. And that diversity is important for everyone, perhaps especially those who fit the profile of a "typical" student of mine who is interested in finance, and who intends to work in the financial sector after graduation.

The second important aspect of providing an inclusive, engaging classroom environment is to take special care to ensure that classroom discussions are as balanced across gender, racial and intellectual lines as possible. Not everyone feels equally entitled to a voice in the classroom, and those differences are magnified in a class where background knowledge can vary dramatically across students, and in ways that correlate with class, and race and gender. I've not found a magic bullet to this issue, other than to redouble my attention to it every semester. Especially in small seminars, what works for one set of individuals and personalities might not work for the next. But the important part for me is to go into every semester fully aware of the difficulties of teaching my courses inclusively, of the importance of doing so, and in the knowledge that these problems won't solve themselves.