
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy prioritizes stimulating students' curiosity about big puzzles in the social world and encouraging them to explore creative solutions to these problems. I strive to help students develop the analytical skills they need to evaluate the validity of competing theoretical claims and vet evidence linking these claims to classroom the question at hand. My teaching is interactive, engaging and challenging. This approach allows me to gauge how well students understand course material and keep students engaged throughout sessions. I especially enjoy challenging students to develop healthy skepticism towards course materials and information they encounter in their day-to-day lives. It is my goal to prepare them to develop original thoughts and arguments, even if they go against conventional wisdom.

My teaching also emphasizes the real-world relevance of theories and concepts learned in class. I aim to make abstract theories and concepts accessible to students and urge them to formulate research ideas that align with their interests. I use real-word examples to illustrate theoretical points during my lectures and devise individual and group projects that allow students to apply insights from the course to problems with practical significance or current issue. Therefore, I typically supplement my lectures and seminar discussions with a wide range of teaching aids, including: documentary films, policy simulations, news, capstone group projects, community service, and others. I consider these aids enrich students' learning experience and benefits their unique approaches to absorbing information.

Within the classroom, my teaching philosophy rests on three principles: (i) preparedness; (ii) active participation; and (iii) real-world application and teamwork. I consider preparedness is a cornerstone of learning. Unprepared students are less likely to learn and may have a negative influence on the quality of discussion and learning of others. Preparedness is particularly important for my class as I expose students to materials that dissect real word problems from distinct theoretical perspectives. Students must engage materials before class to take a critical view these arguments and respond to them in their own voice. I promote preparedness by emphasizing the importance class discussions and encouraging students to read all assigned material before class. I also provide "focus questions" for upcoming sessions and, in undergraduate classes, use pop quizzes to push students to read assigned material before class.

Active engagement is closely linked to students' levels of preparation, engagement with course material, and in-class participation. When students are prepared, they are more able to make intelligent contributions to class discussions. This, in turn, raises the quality of the discussion

and learning experience of the entire classroom. To this end, I work to create a dynamic and interactive learning environment that challenges students to respond to my guiding questions, ask questions of their own, and challenge each other through thoughtful discussion. This approach helps students focus throughout the session and allows me to gauge their understanding of the material in real time. I do not believe discussions should end in class. Hence, I organize online forums that allow students to continue class discussions and interact with their peers by posting questions or responding to questions. I encourage participation in these forums by making them a critical component of students' participation grades.

Finally, I cannot understate the importance of real word application of concepts, theories, and methods and of using team work to accomplish this. In my experience, many students choose a course because they are interested in the subject matter or because they aim to relate course to an issue or problem important to them. No course can provide answers to all issues that interest students. Nonetheless, I try to ensure course material are applicable to a broad range real-world problems and challenge students to apply concepts, theories, and methods to problems they care about. In doing this I always emphasize the importance of creative solutions and teamwork. I prize teamwork given the firm belief that students' diverse backgrounds and experiences ensure they will learn more from each other than from working independently.

I also believe teamwork helps students build key professional skills such as giving and receiving feedback. I promote teamwork by requiring students to work in small groups within the classroom and prepare group projects that count toward their final grades. Group projects are particularly important for my applied graduate courses. Here, students are expected to: (i) identify an empirical question related to poverty, conflict, and development in poor or FCV countries, preferably in partnership with an international organization; (ii) explore their question by collecting original data or leverage existing data; and (iii) present the findings and recommendations to policy makers, academic experts, and fellow students.

Teaching Experience

I have taught courses at the undergraduate level and graduate level at several universities, including Duke, Columbia, and NYU.

At Duke University, I will be teaching two undergraduate courses. The first course, **Political Violence, Repression, and Organized Crime** (co-taught with Livia Schubiger) will introduce students to a research agenda on intra-state armed conflict, repression, extremism, and organized crime, with the view to understanding how violent, non-state actors interact with the state and civilian populations and the consequences of these interactions for social stability (. [See course syllabus here.](#)) Furthermore, in the Fall of 2022, will also be teaching a new course on the **Political Economy of Conflict, Development, and Peacebuilding in Africa and the Middle East** (this is a course for advanced undergraduate students and graduate students.). It tackles some major questions in contemporary research on the political economy of conflict,

development, and peacebuilding, with special focus on Sub Africa (SSA) and the Middle East (MENA). The course will also explore intersectionality between and across these areas.

Prior to Duke, I designed and taught an undergraduate course on **Politics of Africa (Y26.667)** in the School of Continuing and Professional Studies at New York University in Spring 2009. ([See course syllabus here.](#)) This course focused on 5 puzzles confronting contemporary politics and development in Africa: (i) Why are some African state structures weaker than others? (ii) Why are some African countries more prone to pervasive economic crises than others? (iii) What explains variation in democratic transition and consolidation? (iv) Why some African countries suffer from violent civil wars while others are spared? And (v) Why are new threats such as diseases or environmental problems so prevalent in some countries, but not in others?

At the graduate level, AT Duke University, am teaching in the Fall of 2021 a graduate course titled, **Core in Security, Peace and Conflict** (with Kyle Beardsley) in the Fall of 2020 ([See course syllabus here.](#)) This course introduces students to the literature and some of the cutting-edged research agendas related to studies in international relations (security, peace, and conflict). We will cover a wide array of approaches that relate to both interstate and intrastate conflict and cooperation. While the course does not cover all the important relevant work in inter-state and intra-state research, it will sample a spectrum of the work from the foundational work and studies to the state-of-the-art approaches. And, as stated earlier, I will be teaching in the Fall of 2022 a new course on the **Political Economy of Conflict, Development, and Peacebuilding in Africa and the Middle East**, which also targets also graduate students. I also plan to teach in the coming years a multi-disciplinary course on **field methods and survey design in political economy and security, peace, and conflict** research.

Prior to coming to Duke, I was the primary instructor for three sections of **Conceptual Foundations of International Politics (INAFU6800)** in the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), Columbia University, in Fall 2009 ([See course syllabus here.](#)). This semester-long course sought to encourage students to think critically about current problems and challenges in international politics and used central concepts, theories, and analytical tools from social science to find answers. The course was divided into two parts. The first was a lecture/plenary session (meeting once a week) to discuss the theoretical literature drawn from different fields in the social sciences and was delivered by a series of distinguished members of the Columbia faculty who are authorities in these fields as well as experienced practitioners. The second was a seminar-style sections also meet every week to devolve into the course material in details and evaluate students. I was the primary instructor for 3 such sections of about 20 students each.

Finally, I have delivered guest lectures for several undergraduate and graduate courses, including at Brown University, John Hopkins University and American University. I have also severed as an external advisor for capstone projects for master level students studying at Georgetown University, John Hopkins, and American University, among others. In these lectures I've allowed students to use original data from my current impact evaluation projects to address important policy questions under the guidance of their professor and myself.

Teaching interests

My research interests lay at the intersection of international security, peace and conflict, and the political economy of conflict and development, particularly in Africa and MENA. I am passionate about teaching a wide range of subjects at undergraduate and graduate levels and I am well prepared to advise interested students and supervise independent research. Below is a sample of potential courses I could teach:

- Political Economy of conflict, development, and peacebuilding (lecture or seminar, undergraduate/graduate)
- African and/or Middle Eastern politics and development (lecture or seminar, undergraduate/graduate)
- African civil wars, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding in comparative perspectives (seminar, advanced undergraduate/graduate)
- International interventions and democracy promotion after civil war (seminar, advanced undergraduate/graduate)
- Labor market and social stability in fragile states (seminar, advanced undergraduate/graduate)
- Gender, development, and peace (seminar, advanced undergraduate/graduate)