

Teaching and Professional Norms in Political Science
Political Science 597C
Fall 2003

Friday 1:30-3:00, Room 316 Burrowes Bldg.
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The Purpose.

Welcome to graduate school and to the profession of political science! Over the course of this semester we will take a tour through the many roles graduate students typically assume in the first two years of academic life. In your third year at PSU you will take a second and similar course focusing on the last half of your graduate career and beyond. In both courses, our goal is to help you to succeed both in graduate school and in the profession more widely.

The Plan.

Transitioning to graduate school can be a bit overwhelming. Seldom do students go through the entire first year without questioning their decision to go to graduate school and/or without wondering how they will make it through graduate school. For most students, these are temporary feelings, rites of passage, really, that are normal parts of the transition from student to scholar. To dull the ache and provide direction through the year, this course will cover a variety of topics that are divided into transitional topics (What needs to be done and how will I do it all?), professionalization topics (How do I become a part of the wider profession), and teaching topics. The list of topics is designed to highlight those topics about which students have had questions or concerns and about which faculty and your peers can provide some wisdom.

Each course session should be thought of as a working session in which we are learning about the tasks ahead and strategizing for ways to meet them successfully. We will often have guest speakers in class, but some of the sessions will be spent hands on, planning a teaching session, creating a curriculum vitae, and devising ways to make the transition to graduate school easier.

Evaluation.

This course is pass/fail. Enthusiastic and active participation are key to success in graduate school and beyond and hence also key to passing the course. You will also be asked to produce a curriculum vita, a backward calendar, and to accumulate a set of information that should go in a folder marked “graduate school and beyond” or somesuch. (Put your syllabus in there!) You will find that over the next months and years you will return to this folder (which may very well be electronic) to find something you need to help you succeed down the road.

If you cannot attend a class session for some reason, please see me in advance when possible.

The texts.

There are no texts to purchase for this class. You should, however, note the texts and resources listed at the back of the syllabus. Each provides a guide to help you succeed in graduate school and beyond and each may be helpful to you at different points in your career.

The Weekly Plan

- September 2 **The beginning:** Where am I and what am I doing?!
- TO DO: Meet with your advisor, RA or TA supervisor, and if you are a fellow, talk with some faculty with whom you might choose to apprentice yourself this year. Find out what is expected of you. Jot down some notes on these conversations for sharing over the next few class periods. Join the APSA.
- September 5 **Mentoring. Getting a good start.**
Professors Gretchen Casper and Glenn Palmer
- September 12 **Succeeding as a teaching assistant.**
Professors Michael Bernhard and Tamar London
- September 19 **Succeeding as a research assistant.**
Professors Marie Hojnacki and Scott Bennett
- September 26 **Looking forward to the end. The Backward Calendar.**
Frank Baumgartner (print from his web page before class)
In this session, we will map out your time at PSU.
- October 3 **Succeeding in the Classroom.**
TBA
Bring a copy of each of the syllabi you have and also a reading assignment for an upcoming class period. Be sure to have read some or all of the assignment and bring any notes you've taken as well. I'll bring the comprehensive reading lists and sample exam questions. We will strategize ways to prepare for class sessions, seminar exams, etc.
- October 10 **Fall Break**
- October 17 **Presenting yourself to the profession.**
C.V.s and web pages, conferences and talks.
Working Session. This session we will discuss when and how to best present yourself to the profession: When should I go to a conference (and which one)? Why should I be attending departmental talks and how do I think about them? Should I have a web page and what should it contain? We will also create C.V.s during this session.

- October 24. **Teaching: Planning Sections, part 1.**
I've asked other students who have or are serving as TAs to attend this and next week, to share their experience and advice for planning sections. What are the problems? What is easy?
- October 31. **Teaching: Planning Sections, part 2.**
We will continue the discussion from last week, branching out to discuss different ways to motivate students to learn. Issues of grading etc.
- November 7. **Teaching: Planning Sections, part 3.**
In this session, I'll ask those of you currently serving as teaching assistants to come to class with information about what will be covered in the next teaching session and any instructions given by the professor. Those of you not currently teaching will help the others plan a section.
- November 14. **Using your summers.**
TBA
Summers can be spent playing or working, ideally you'll find a way to do a nice mix of both. For the working side of things, there are many opportunities. We'll talk about what, where, and how to pay for it (or how it pays for itself!).
- November 21. **The Candidacy Exam**
Professors Scott Bennett and Holloway Sparks
Each of you will take a candidacy exam in March/April of your first year. We'll talk about the exam and how to prepare for it.
- November 28. **Thanksgiving Break**
- December 5 **Selecting (and writing) a paper/MA/dissertation topic.**
Professorsc Lee Ann Banaszak and Eric Plutzer
We'll work through suggestions for selecting a topic in the context of a semester long course, for the MA, and for the dissertation. We will also talk about how to approach writing papers.
- December 12 **Planning for the future.**
Working Session.
Pull out the backward calendar again! We'll see how far you've come and talk about what's next.

Readings/Resources

The Penn State Teacher II

You can obtain this text free by sending an email to <http://www.psu.edu/celt/PST/pst.html> from your PSU account and asking for a copy.

McKeachie, Wilbert J. 1999. *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research and Theory for College and University Teachers* (10th edition), Houghton Mifflin (Trade).

McKeachie's *Teaching Tips*, is a popular book that covers a great deal, but is perhaps short on depth. The book will likely contain some information on any topic that you wish.

Boice, Robert. 2000. *Advise for New Faculty Members: Nihil Nimus*. Allyn and Bacon.

Boice's *Advise for New Faculty Members*, offers a philosophical approach to teaching, research, and the profession. It is designed for assistant professors but is widely applicable to us all. It is an easy read and offers some good general advise.

Morris, Mary, Julia Heilberger, and Vick Miller. 2000. *The Academic Job Search Handbook*. The University of Pennsylvania Press.

There really is no better time to plan for getting a job than now. It is not as simple as applying for jobs the year before you leave PSU. Getting a job requires you to take on tasks and set goals now. This book is designed to help you to do this well. While teaching is one part of the preparation for an academic job, this book considers your preparation for the job search in all areas.