Teaching Statement

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One of the most rewarding moments in my teaching occurs when students realize that theories and concepts are not abstract ideas detached from reality, but analytical tools that help them make sense of complex social events. I have often seen this moment emerge in interdisciplinary classroom settings, where students from different academic backgrounds work directly with real data, policy cases, or network representations and recognize how theoretical assumptions shape empirical interpretation. These experiences motivate my approach to teaching and inform my primary goal as an educator: to create a classroom environment in which students actively engage with important questions, evaluate competing perspectives using evidence, and apply analytical tools to real-world problems.

I have served as both Instructor of Record and Associate Instructor at Indiana University Bloomington across courses in political science and informatics. As Instructor of Record, I independently designed and taught *Politics of Global Governance* (Summer 2023), an upper-level course examining international organizations, transnational actors, institutional design, and governance networks in global politics. I have also served as Instructor of Record for *Data Fluency* (Fall 2025), a large undergraduate course with approximately 60 students focused on data-driven reasoning, analytical literacy, and applied problem solving using tools such as Excel, R, Tableau, data visualization, and introductory network analysis. In these roles, I was responsible for syllabus design, lectures, assessments, student mentoring, and coordination with associate instructors. In addition, I have extensive experience as an Associate Instructor for courses including *Data Fluency*, *Analyzing Politics*, *Introduction to Informatics*, and *International Organization*. I led discussion sections, developed instructional materials (including R scripts to generate solution keys), and supported large and diverse student cohorts.

Drawing on my interdisciplinary training in political science and informatics, particularly data fluency, network analysis, and computational social science, I design courses that bridge theory, empirical analysis, and substantive political inquiry. I view effective teaching as an active process in which students learn not only what scholars argue, but how knowledge is produced, evaluated, and applied. Central to this approach is ensuring that students feel supported rather than compared, and that no one feels left behind as concepts become more complex.

In the classroom, I view my role as a facilitator of learning rather than a passive transmitter of information. Across topics in international relations, global governance and political methodology, I use structured repetition by reintroducing core concepts when new material builds on earlier ideas, allowing students to see how analytical frameworks accumulate rather than appear in isolation. I also deliberately connect new concepts to students' prior learning, which helps demystify abstract theories and lowers barriers to engagement.

For example, in my global governance course, students examine how international organizations and state actors interact within complex governance networks. After introducing competing theoretical perspectives on networks and institutional cooperation, I ask students to consider how different theories would explain distinct network structures. We discuss,

for instance, how a *receiver effect* operates—where certain attributes increase the likelihood that an actor receives support from others. Students then connect institutional roles, such as serving as working group or task force chairs within an IGO, to agenda-setting power and increased support from other states. We conclude by examining how strategic bandwagoning theories help explain these observed patterns. This exercise helps students see that analytical tools do not replace theory, but rather sharpen theoretical reasoning and clarify substantive implications, thereby facilitating active learning.

My commitment to inclusive teaching has been shaped in part by professional development through Indiana University's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), where I participated in workshops on inclusive pedagogy, recognizing microaggressions, and supporting students with diverse and intersecting identities. In practice, I avoid evaluative language that implicitly ranks students' abilities, redirect discussions when individuals are asked to speak on behalf of entire groups, and emphasize individual perspectives. I also use microaffirmations—such as affirming reasoning processes and progress rather than innate ability—to reinforce students' sense of belonging and intellectual confidence, particularly in methods-oriented courses where anxiety is common.

Data Fluency provides a particularly clear illustration of this inclusive approach in practice. Because students enter the course with highly uneven prior exposure to data, statistics, and programming, I explicitly normalize these differences from the outset and frame the course as a skills-building process rather than a test of prior preparation. I design assignments with multiple entry points, emphasize learning through practice and iteration, and consistently reinforce the idea that analytical skills are developed over time rather than innate. To support continuity and inclusive participation, I use TopHat at the beginning of class sessions to briefly revisit key concepts from prior lessons and to solicit students' perspectives before introducing new material, allowing me to identify points of confusion early, ensure that all students' perspectives are represented—not only those who are more comfortable speaking publicly—and adjust explanations or examples accordingly. Together, these strategies help reduce anxiety, encourage sustained engagement, and create a classroom environment in which all students feel supported in developing confidence with data and analytical reasoning.

As a result of these teaching philosophies and experiences, I am prepared to teach a range of undergraduate and graduate courses, including International Relations, International Organization and Global Governance, Political Analysis, Data Fluency, Networked World Politics, and Political Network Analysis. Across all of these courses, my goal is to help students develop conceptual clarity, analytical confidence, and the ability to connect political theory with empirical evidence.

In sum, my teaching philosophy centers on active inquiry, analytical rigor, and inclusive engagement. I see teaching as a collaborative and reciprocal intellectual process in which students learn to ask better questions, evaluate evidence critically, and apply political analysis to the complex challenges of the contemporary world. As an instructor, I continuously learn from my students, refine my teaching materials, and update my knowledge in order to better support student learning. For additional information about my teaching, please visit https://jeffery-wang.com.