

Lev Szentkirályi Teaching Statement

I am committed to a student-centered pedagogical approach that accommodates the different learning styles of my students, and which teaches to their particular strengths. This means that I integrate principles of inclusive excellence in both my curriculum design and classroom management—striving to capitalize on the diversity of my students’ personal experiences, preexisting beliefs, academic backgrounds, and proficiency with the subject matter. My courses aim beyond improving content knowledge, to developing transferrable critical thinking, research, and writing skills that foster the academic success and professional development of my students. What I believe distinguishes me from other instructors are my extensive teaching experience, my unique experience teaching college-level writing, the diversity of courses I can offer, and my research on teaching and learning in political science—which I have presented at national research and teaching conferences.

1. Extensive Teaching Experience

I have been the lead instructor of nine courses in political theory, IR, and writing—including the following:

- Global Justice (fall 2016, summer 2016)
- First-Year Writing and Rhetoric (spring 2016, fall 2015)
- Government and Capitalism in the U.S. (spring 2015)
- Environmental Political Theory (summer 2014)
- Global Issues (summer 2014 and summer 2013)

I also am scheduled to teach both Global Justice and Writing in Political Science in spring 2017. (For details and additional course syllabi visit <http://levszentkiralyi.com/teaching>.) I have also worked as a teaching assistant for the following eight courses:

- Introduction to International Relations (fall 2014, fall 2013, and spring 2011)
- History of Western Political Thought (spring 2014, fall 2011, and fall 2010)
- Quantitative Research Methods (spring 2013)
- American Political Thought (fall 2012)
- Environmental Political Theory (spring 2012)
- Introduction to Environmental Public Policy Analysis (fall 2011)
- General Problems of Philosophy (spring 2009, fall 2008, and fall 2007)
- Philosophy and Social Ethics (spring 2008)

While my teaching record demonstrates my ability to teach traditional, content-specific political theory and IR courses, I also have experience developing interdisciplinary, service-learning, and writing-intensive curriculum, which can both accommodate the different concentrations of study among our Political Science majors and also the different academic backgrounds of our non-majors.

Interdisciplinary Curriculum Design. For instance, my Global Justice course (syllabus attached) blends instruction in principles of academic argumentation and writing with the study of diverse normative problems of international politics, such as the exodus of Syrian refugees and the rights of migrants, alleviating global poverty, and distributing the costs of global climate change. This university-wide course offering encourages students to bring their discipline-specific studies and interests to bear on the normative issues we examine, and to integrate the principles of academic writing they learn in my class with their knowledge of the conventions of writing in their particular fields of study.

As another example, my Government and Capitalism in the U.S. course (syllabus attached), bridges American political economy with subjects of IR and political theory. Students first explore historical domestic policy decisions that established contemporary American capitalist institutions, and the political influence that economic special interests have had on these developments. Students then study how

these domestic policies have shaped and continue to influence economic foreign policy decisions and the promotion of liberal capitalist principles abroad—examining, e.g., the influence of multinational corporations on U.S. foreign direct investment or the globalization of liberal trade policies. Finally, students examine various normative problems with the effects of contemporary domestic and global capitalism. By introducing students to diverse issue-areas in different areas of study, this class is designed to appeal to students across our subfields and in the social sciences and humanities more broadly.

Service-Learning and Online Courses. With my experience designing engaging online and meaningful service-learning courses, I can also help to meet the growing demand for these course offerings. With a recent (\$4,000) grant from the University of Colorado Center for Community-Based Learning and Research, I have integrated a service component into my fall 2016 Global Justice course: my students will be working throughout the semester with Intercambio de Comunidades, a humanitarian organization that helps local Latino immigrants integrate into their communities by providing various services, such as English language courses. In working closely with Latino community members, students will learn first-hand some the difficult challenges immigrants face (from language barriers to cultural stigmas to limited employment opportunities) as they work to establish a new life in a foreign community. This experience allows students to apply the theoretical concepts and problems of justice the course explores and illustrates the practical relevance of this subject matter, while also motivating them to develop a sense of civic responsibility to improve the welfare of underprivileged and marginalized groups.

Alternatively, in an effort to cultivate a sense of community in the absence of the traditional classroom, my online courses—see, e.g., [Global Issues](#) and [Global Justice](#)—regularly require students to write blog posts (brief, researched position papers) and to constructively analyze the arguments of their classmates, and to engage in peer-review of their major writing assignments. Moreover, I provide students either video or audio lectures, virtual office hours via Skype, and extensive written feedback on course assignments to create a more personal and productive virtual learning environment.

2. Experience Teaching Writing

While many instructors acknowledge the value of critical thinking and writing skills, and while many may work to integrate certain lessons that test these skills into their otherwise content-based curricula, one of the unique aspects of my dossier is that I have demonstrated experience teaching semester-long courses that focus exclusively on improving the analytical, information literacy, and academic writing skills of our students. And in an effort to make my experience teaching college-level writing relevant to my teaching Political Science, I have developed new course curricula that challenge students to develop these key, transferrable skills by engaging and critically analyzing contemporary Political Science scholarship.

For instance, in addition to the Global Justice course described above, I designed and I am slated to teach a Writing in Political Science course next spring (syllabus attached). This course has two overarching and complementary objectives. The first (“writing across the curriculum” (WAC)) goal is to have students develop transferable skills of rhetorical analysis, information literacy, reading comprehension and critical thinking, and academic argumentation, which they can apply in all facets of their undergraduate education. Yet, by having students critically analyze a diverse selection of literature in American Politics, Public Policy, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory, the second (“writing in the discipline” (WID)) goal is to have students build knowledge of standards of research and conventions in writing within the Political Science discipline and across its various subfields. By challenging students to develop a working understanding of basic principles of social scientific inquiry, to enhance their ability to interpret descriptive statistics and regression tables, and to critically evaluate the empirical analyses of peer-reviewed scholarship, this course is designed to augment the advanced quantitative, qualitative, and analytical research methods students will learn in their upper-division studies in Political Science.

3. Diverse Course Offerings

With this multifaceted teaching experience and my diverse teaching interests, I am prepared to teach a number of courses in political theory and IR, including the following lower- and upper-division courses.

Political Theory. Environmental Justice, Global Justice, Food Justice, Climate Ethics, Ethics of Risk, History of Western Political Thought, American Political Thought, Liberalism and Its Critics, Capitalism and Its Critics, and Just War Theory.

International Relations. Introduction to IR, International Affairs, International Security, Revolution and Political Violence, International Organizations, and Global Environmental Politics.

Also, with my experience teaching writing, I am excited about continuing to teach Global Justice and Writing in Political Science and designing new writing-intensive course offerings such as the following.

Writing Courses. Advanced Writing in Political Science, Environmental Political Theory: Writing for Social Reform, Writing in International Relations, Peace and War: The Rhetoric of Armed Conflict.

4. Research on Teaching and Learning in Political Science

Beyond actively striving to improve my skills as an educator and to create innovative and engaging curricula to enrich the learning experience of my students, I have also worked to build knowledge of the best pedagogical practices through various research projects in teaching and learning in Political Science. For instance, one of my working papers (presented at the 2016 APSA Teaching and Learning Conference) explores how formal writing instruction can enhance the service-learning experience. I argue that in our discipline service-learning courses commonly fail to impress on students the practical and theoretical relevance of their community engagement, as their poorly-scaffolded writing assignments neglect to challenge students to critically reflect on their volunteer work and to synthesize their service experience with course material or independent research.

To build on this research, I am currently conducting an empirical study of the effects that service-learning has on knowledge retention and the development of critical thinking and writing skills across my two sections of Global Justice this term. I have developed several quantitative and qualitative measures of aptitudes in critical thinking, rhetorical analysis, information literacy, and writing, and I have constructed carefully-scaffolded writing assignments that test these aptitudes, which I will use to evaluate quality of argumentation and writing of my service-learning students, and compare both their pre-service and post-service writing against the work produced by students in the non-service-learning-based control group.

Also, concerned that instruction in critical thinking, information literacy, and writing is often absent in our undergraduate curricula, another working paper of mine (presented at the 2016 APSA Annual Meeting) argues that we often leave our students to refine these skills with little guidance or consistency. The general trend in Political Science is to have students learn by doing: to read scholarly works, become familiar with how to interpret complex arguments and empirical analyses, and to emulate the structure and style of the literature they read. Yet, in these discipline-specific courses, where teaching content takes priority over formal instruction in analytical and writing skills, this approach mistakenly assumes that our students have the capacity to infer principles of good argumentation, analysis, and writing from their course readings, and to apply these principles in their own coursework. The same can be said for general approaches to teaching writing in our content-based Political Science courses, which similarly assume that by engaging in the writing process students internalize principles and habits of good writing and revision and, thus, can independently improve their writing skills. Accordingly, I stress the need to integrate formal instruction in critical thinking and writing into our major requirements; and since content-based courses do not permit devoting considerable time to developing these essential transferable skills, I defend the need for the Writing in Political Science curriculum described above.