

Teaching Philosophy Statement

My teaching philosophy is rooted in the conviction that education is both an intellectual journey and a transformative act of civic preparation. I view the classroom as a collaborative space where students learn not only to master concepts but also to apply them with rigor, creativity, and empathy to the pressing challenges of their time. Three commitments shape my pedagogy: to connect theory to lived experience, to integrate research and teaching, and to cultivate inclusive learning environments where students of all backgrounds can thrive.

Instructional Approaches

In my courses—including *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, *Introduction to Political Analysis*, *Politics of South Asia*, and *American Government*—I employ experiential and inquiry-driven methods that encourage students to think critically and engage actively. In *Politics of South Asia*, for example, I use role-play simulations where students assume the perspectives of activists, leaders, and policymakers, grappling with questions of democratic backsliding and human rights advocacy. In *Introduction to Political Analysis*, I incorporate the pedagogy of play—gamified data exercises and role-playing as policy analysts—such as having students design a short survey, predict class responses, and then analyze the actual data to see whose hypotheses ‘win’. This makes methodological concepts accessible while cultivating habits of inquiry and analysis. In *American Government*, I design assignments that link constitutional principles to contemporary debates, inviting students to analyze how institutions adapt under stress.

While I tailor to the needs of each course, I also emphasize practices that unify my teaching across contexts. For example, I regularly use structured reflection activities that enable students to connect abstract concepts to current events or personal experiences. Whether in a large introductory lecture or a small upper-level seminar, this practice ensures that students not only understand theories in an abstract sense but also see their relevance to lived political realities.

My online teaching, including courses such as *Gender and Politics in Islamic States* and *Democracy and Human Rights in Developing Countries*, emphasizes structured engagement and collaborative learning. Through peer review assignments, video reflections, and interactive assessments, I build intellectual community even in virtual spaces, ensuring that online students remain as engaged as those in traditional classrooms. Many of the strategies I developed for online teaching have also strengthened my in-person courses, where they take the form of small-group workshops, think-pair-share activities, and role simulations that build community and deepen learning.

Innovative and Research-Informed Teaching

My pedagogy is enriched by my research in political behavior and comparative politics, which informs both the content and the methods I use in the classroom. I introduce students to survey experiments, data analysis, and exercises using emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, encouraging them to evaluate sources, evidence, and biases with care. In *Politics of South Asia*, for instance, students critically assess AI-generated summaries of major political events—such as India’s 2019 elections or Bangladesh’s 2024 protests—for implicit bias, sharpening their methodological and ethical reasoning. In *Introduction to Political Analysis*, students use AI to create a small sample dataset, then check it for statistical errors, practicing data validity and critical evaluation.

Teaching effectiveness requires constant reflection and assessment. Early in my teaching, I tended to rely on complex academic terminology when introducing concepts. After receiving feedback from a faculty observer who encouraged me to explain material as if I were addressing an 8th grader, I began to break down ideas into simple terms and concrete examples, ensuring accessibility while maintaining analytical

rigor. My commitment to pedagogy has been recognized through a nomination for the department's *Best Teaching Assistant Award* at the University of Kentucky, and my classroom observer evaluations average 4.8/5 for clarity and engagement. These evaluations and recognitions confirm my ability to foster meaningful learning experiences while continually refining my practice.

Promoting Inclusivity and Mentorship

As a first-generation international scholar, I am acutely aware of the barriers faced by underrepresented, first-generation, and non-native English-speaking students. I design classrooms that are trauma-informed and accessible, incorporating captioned lectures, multimodal content delivery, and visual data exercises. My teaching effectiveness is documented in faculty observation reports, which commended my ability to foster an inclusive environment where students feel welcomed and encouraged, reinforcing my commitment to trauma-informed and accessible teaching practices.

At the University of Kentucky, I mentored four first-generation Bangladeshi graduate students, guiding them through the research design, professional development, and conference preparation—skills that have prepared me to supervise graduate research projects effectively. In addition to mentoring graduate students, I have supervised undergraduate students, including first-generation and rural students, in independent research projects that connect feminist theory, postcolonial scholarship, and empirical analysis in my *Gender and Politics* class—several of which have culminated in conference presentations. These experiences reflect my ability to supervise students at both undergraduate and graduate levels, supporting their academic and professional growth.

In politically sensitive discussions—such as those concerning gender rights, authoritarianism, or inequality—I establish clear norms of respect and model openness to diverse perspectives. My goal is not to insulate students from conflict, but to equip them with the skills to engage across difference. By creating space for constructive dialogue, I help students practice the habits of democratic deliberation alongside academic analysis.

Future Goals

Looking forward, I aim to expand my use of immersive simulations, technology-enhanced learning, and interdisciplinary course design. I am developing courses such as *The Politics of Genocide and Atrocity Prevention*—informed by my faculty fellowship at Binghamton University's Institute of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention—and *Identity Politics in South Asia*. These offerings would blend theoretical foundations with experiential projects, equipping students with the analytical tools and ethical awareness necessary for leadership in a globally interconnected world.

Instructor of Record

Mean Score of Teaching Evaluation (Fall 2019-Spring 2024)

Mean

LESSON ORGANIZATION

Clearly organized and well-managed	5
Provides lesson contexts and relevance	4
Assert Learning goals	4.5

COMMUNICATION

Explain difficult concepts effectively	4
Emphasize important points	4

KNOWLEDGE

Appear to have command over background and subject	5
Stays on Topic and achieve stated learning goals	5

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Encouraged student effectively	5
Respond well to students' comments/questions	5
Demonstrates confidence, rapport to students	5

PROFESSIONALISM

Punctual	5
Tone and comments are encouraging and constructive	5
foster an inclusive environment where all students feel welcomed and encouraged	5

5 - Excellent

4-Very Good

3-Good

2-Average

1-problematic

Response Summary:

TA OBSERVATION FORM

Thank you for participating in The Graduate School's process of [TA Supervision and Feedback](#).

PREVIEW: [Click here to see a preview of this observation form prior to completing it.](#)

The following observation form is to be completed by a faculty member assigned to observe a Teaching Assistant's class or lab, whether delivered in person, synchronously online, or via an asynchronous online module. Please complete at least one form per teaching assistant (for [Types 1, 2, and 3 TAs](#)).

Upon submission of this form, a copy of the observation along with your email address will be forwarded to the TA observed and the TA's supervisor. The purpose of this is to facilitate further communication and additional constructive feedback. ***Please be open and willing to respond to questions and comments from the TA and/or the TA's supervisor.***

Before proceeding, please make sure you have available all of the information below, which is required to complete this form:

- TA's name, student ID number, email address, and department
- Email address of TA's supervisor

Q1. Please enter your information below.

Your Name:	Dan Morey
Your Email Address:	daniel-morey@uky.edu

Q2. Please enter the following information about the TA you observed.

TA's Name:	Tasnia Symoom
TA's Student ID Number:	12328409
TA's Email Address:	Tasnia.Symoom@uky.edu
TA's Department	Political Science
Email Address of TA's Supervisor:	dsvoss@uky.edu

Q5. Please select the TA's Type below.

- Type 1: Primary Instructor

Q22. Please enter the following information about the class you observed.

Term (e.g. Fall 2020)	Spring 2024
Observation Date(s):	April 16
Course and Section Number:	PS 372-001

Q6. Please select the modality of the observed class.

- In-Person Class

In-Person Class Observation

Q21. Please rate the TA's performance in the following key areas:

<i>Lesson Organization: Session appears clearly organized and well managed; lesson context is provided; learning goals are articulated</i>	Exceeds Expectations
<i>Communication: Explains difficult concepts clearly and effectively and emphasizes important points</i>	Meets Expectations
<i>Knowledge: Appears to have command over background and subject knowledge</i>	Meets Expectations
<i>Student Engagement: Engages students effectively and responds constructively to questions and comments</i>	Meets Expectations
<i>Professionalism: Is punctual and prepared; tone and comments are encouraging and constructive; fosters an inclusive environment where all students feel welcomed and encouraged</i>	Exceeds Expectations

Q15. Summary of primary strengths observed:

Arrives early, prepared to start class on time, connected material across lectures.

Q16. Summary of suggested areas of improvement:

Manually calling roll took a lot of time and seems out of place with all the technology we have today. Need more movement, you stayed close to the computer to change slides which made it difficult to engage the far side of the class. A clicker would allow for more movement.

Q34. Please enter your Director of Graduate Studies' email address below.

michael.zilis@UKY.EDU

Q28.

If you would like to copy a Department Chair, Administrator or Manager, or a DGS Staff Person on this observation, please enter those email addresses in the boxes provided below. (No more than one email address per box, please.)

<i>Email Address:</i>	N/A
<i>Email Address:</i>	N/A
<i>Email Address:</i>	N/A

Please click the blue arrow below to submit this observation form to The Graduate School.

Once you have done so, a copy of this observation along with your email address will be forwarded to the TA and the TA's supervisor. Again, please be open to further communication and constructive feedback with the goal of improving the TA's student interaction and instruction.

Response Summary:

TA END-OF-SEMESTER EVALUATION FORM

Thank you for participating in The Graduate School's process of [TA Supervision and Feedback](#).

PREVIEW: [Click here to see a PDF preview of this evaluation form prior to submitting.](#)

The following end-of-semester evaluation form is to be completed by the Teaching Assistant's direct supervisor for all [TA Types](#). This evaluation provides a summative assessment of the TA's performance throughout the entire semester. Please complete one form per teaching assistant.

Upon submission of this form, a copy of the evaluation along with your email address will be forwarded to the TA. The purpose of this is to facilitate further communication and additional constructive feedback. ***Please be open and willing to respond to questions and comments from the TA.***

Before proceeding, please make sure you have available all of the information below, which is required to complete this form:

- TA's name, student ID number, email address, and department

Q1. Please enter your information below.

Your Name:	Michael Zilis
Your Email Address:	michael.zilis@uky.edu

Q2. Please enter the following information about the TA being evaluated.

TA's Name:	Tasnia Symoom
TA's Student ID Number:	12328409
TA's Email Address:	tasnia.symoom@uky.edu
TA's Hiring Department	PS

Q5. Please select the TA's role below.

- Classroom or laboratory contact TA (in person or online)

Q22. Please enter the following information about this evaluation.

Term (e.g. Fall 2020)	Fall 2023
Course(s) and Section(s):	PS 372-003

Evaluation of Performance

Q21. Please rate the TA's performance in the following key areas:

<i>Apparent content knowledge</i>	Excellent
<i>Management of the course preparations</i>	Excellent
<i>Ability to grade student work accurately and in a timely manner</i>	Excellent
<i>Performance during office hours and review sessions</i>	Not Applicable
<i>Availability to students</i>	Not Applicable
<i>Ability to communicate student concerns to course coordinator/instructor(s)</i>	Not Applicable
<i>Planning and supervising of laboratory experiments</i>	Not Applicable
<i>Overall TA Performance</i>	Excellent

Q15. Please include comments below:

Tasnia did a nice job in managing all aspects of PS 372. To my knowledge, there were no major issues with the course. I observed her give a lesson in class and she did very well.

Q26. Please enter your Director of Graduate Studies' email address below.

michael.zilis@uky.edu

Q24. If you would like to copy a Department Chair, Administrator or Manager, or a DGS Staff Person on this observation, please enter those email addresses in the boxes provided below. (No more than one email address per box, please.)

<i>Email Address:</i>	N/A
<i>Email Address:</i>	N/A
<i>Email Address:</i>	N/A

Please click the blue arrow below to submit this evaluation form to The Graduate School.

Once you have done so, a copy of this evaluation along with your email address will be forwarded to the TA and the TA's supervisor. Again, please be open to further communication and constructive feedback with the goal of improving the TA's student interaction and instruction.

Embedded Data:

N/A



TA Class/Lab Observation and Feedback Form

This form is to be completed by a faculty member who is visiting the TA's class or lab. Complete one form per teaching assistant per semester (for TA Types 1, 2 and 3).

Department Name

Semester & Year Evaluated

Teaching Assistant Tasnia Symoom_

Student ID # 12328409

Faculty Observer Jesse Johnson TA's Supervisor

Date Observed 12/10/19 Course # PS 210 Section 007

NOTE: The TA should read the drafted observation and offer any written response. Finalized forms must be signed by the observer, the TA's supervisor, and the TA. One copy should be placed in the TA's file in the department. We ask that departments collect all observations and evaluations into a group and then scan and forward them as a **single pdf attachment** to Erin Shoot (ejshoo2@uky.edu) no later than February 1 for Fall terms or June 1 for Spring terms.

For each of the following criteria, please circle the best approximation of the student's performance or N/A.

Opening of Lesson	Excellent		Acceptable		Problematic	
Begins on time	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Provides lesson context & relevance	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Asserts learning goal(s)	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Body of Lesson	Excellent		Acceptable		Problematic	
Defines any terms needed to understand concepts	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Uses effective examples, illustrations, anecdotes, etc.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Clearly distinguishes main points from supportive details	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Organizes/sequences information for optimal learning	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Offers clear transitions between major points	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Stays on topic & achieves stated learning goal	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Demonstrates mastery of content knowledge	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Closing of Lesson	Excellent		Acceptable		Problematic	
Reasserts learning goal	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Offers final thoughts and transitions to next session	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Ends on time	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Teacher Presence	Excellent		Acceptable		Problematic	
Checks & responds to student understanding	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Attempts to engage group & individuals as appropriate	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Responds well to students' comments/questions	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Demonstrates confidence, rapport with students	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

Verbal & Spatial Behavior	Excellent		Acceptable		Problematic	
Pacing and articulation	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Voice level	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Gestures & movement	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Eye contact & facial expression	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Use of board, other visual aids	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
Strategic pauses & silences	5	4	3	2	1	N/A

Adapted from A Microteaching Checklist, The Graduate School and CELT, University of Kentucky

Summary of primary strengths observed:

Tasnia had excellent attendance and participation, especially for an 8am class. She also did a solid job giving the students chances to ask questions and inserted several well-placed pauses in the lecture. She also showed a short video clip that did a good job illustrating one of the main points in the lecture.

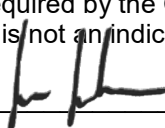
Suggested areas of improvement:

Tasnia needs to do a better job providing more context and the bigger picture for students. More generally, she should build to her main points more slowly by defining key terms and using more examples.

TA's Comments (if any; continue in an attachment if needed)

Required Signatures:

(Note: TA's signature below is required by the Graduate School and indicates that the TA has read and understood his/her evaluation; it is not an indicator of approval.)

Faculty Observer  Date 12/10/19

TA _____ Date _____

TA's Supervisor _____ Date _____