Teaching Statement
Lauren Sukin

Although my department only requires three quarters of teaching assistance, I have chosen to assist seven times with five distinct courses: Introduction to International Relations, International Security in a Changing World, War and Peace in American Foreign Policy, The Face of Battle, and Senior Seminar in Urban Studies. I receive consistently high marks in course reviews, with an average effectiveness score of 4.6/5. In addition to serving as a teaching assistant, I have designed and taught my own pre-collegiate course on the laws and ethics of conflict. As a Mentors-in-Teaching Fellow with the Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning, I provide workshops and feedback on inclusive teaching for online instructors. I advise undergraduate and graduate students through the First-Generation and Low-Income Program at Stanford as well as in the First-Year Ph.D. Student and TA Mentorship Programs, which I've spearheaded in the Department of Political Science.

My extensive teaching and advising experiences stem from my passion for pedagogy and the joy I find in helping students see politics in a new light. I strongly believe the best professors not only possess excellent research skills, but that they are also fantastic teachers, mentors, and administrators. They are aware of diversity in students' identities, learning patterns, and preferences, and they are able to creatively and intuitively design courses that work well for a variety of students. My approach to teaching prioritizes (1) creating meaningful understanding of course materials, (2) fully engaging all students, and (3) building students' portable skillsets. My teaching reviews consistently point to student appreciation of all three dynamics.

Creating Meaningful Understanding

As an instructor, my primary purpose is to guide students to a thorough understanding of course materials. Students should not only learn to recall political events and theories; they should also learn how to analyze the quality of argumentation and appreciate how authors are in conversation. This task begins with carefully crafted syllabi, highlighting critical works from diverse authors to provide students with both depth and breadth. Detailed course preparation involves creating invigorating lectures and activities that incorporate historical and current events, pose thoughtful questions, and encourage students to draw connections between course topics. It requires setting thoughtful expectations for course assignments and providing detailed, individualized feedback to students.

Student Engagement

The most satisfying element of teaching is when students leave the classroom still discussing course topics between themselves. In order to generate excitement and engagement among all of my students, I use a variety of teaching techniques, interdisciplinary course materials, and interactive activities. In particular, I believe that active learning, such as structured debates and simulations, can enhance student experiences. I strive to make conversation in my classroom inclusive and to accommodate a variety of learning styles. For example, I provide students with guides on how to read and analyze works in political science, so that students of all experience levels can feel comfortable contributing. My syllabi contain diverse authors, resources for students, and options on assignments that can accommodate students with different interests, backgrounds, and learning styles. I regularly solicit feedback using anonymous review forms, enabling adaptation to each classroom and constant improvement of my teaching abilities.

A personal interest in pedagogy has driven me to seek out unique courses and learn diverse approaches to teaching. For example, two of the most innovative courses for which I have been a teaching assistant are The Face of Battle and International Security in a Changing World. Both courses notably include creative, immersive experiences. The Face of Battle brings students across the country to complete "staff rides" on battlefields; that is, students walk together through the action of the battle, reenacting and explaining the choices of key players in the conflict. Similarly, International Security in a Changing World is an interdisciplinary course involving an intensive, multi-day simulation of a Nonproliferation Treaty Review conference, complete with international lawyers writing draft resolutions and subject-area experts serving as Heads of State for each delegation. As an organizer and participant in these events, I saw first-hand how creative and immersive experiences can enlighten and inspire students. These experiences have informed the contents of a pre-collegiate course I independently designed and taught: The Ethics of Warfare. The syllabus for this course, updated as an undergraduate lecture course, is attached to this application. In it, I include a variety of teaching techniques and activities in order to suit the needs of many different types of students.

Portable Skills

Courses in political science do not just teach students about politics and social scientific methods; they also provide students with essential portable skills such as critical thinking, data literacy, news literacy, persuasive writing, public speaking, and the ability to conduct original research. I design lessons that will facilitate the development of these skills. For example, when I ask students to utilize structured debates to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of tariffs, I also ask students to film themselves speaking during the debate. I then provide individualized feedback on both argumentation and public speaking skills, and I encourage students to revise and repeat their speeches with this feedback in mind. Similarly, I ask students to meet with me individually when working on papers, and I provide feedback at several points in the process in order to help students improve their writing and research skills. As a committed mentor, I value responsiveness, availability, and detailed, specific feedback. These attributes are critical to helping students develop and hone a variety of skills.

Although my home department is Political Science, I chose to serve as a teaching assistant for the Senior Seminar in Urban Studies during the fall quarter of 2018. In this capacity, I taught students methodologies ranging from qualitative open coding to survey experiments to machine-learning for text analysis. The students' projects covered a broad range of topics and methods, and I worked with each student to realize the best version of their project from the planning stage to final drafts. I greatly valued the chance to guide advanced students in the development of data analysis and research skills that will be applicable far beyond their academic careers.

For graduate students, coursework not only provides an opportunity to develop research skills and delve into specific literatures; it also creates a space in which to enhance professional development. Embedded skills-based training—such as analyzing datasets, writing mock grant proposals and mock referee reports, or drafting pre-analysis plans—can be thoughtfully incorporated into syllabi for graduate-level courses. My graduate training has prepared me to teach a wide range of introductory methods and data analysis courses, survey courses in political science and international relations, and more specialized seminars in international security, foreign policy, nuclear policy, global governance, survey experiments, and research design. In each of these courses, I hope to bring clear communication skills, engage all of my students, and help my students develop valuable skills that they can use throughout their professional lives.

Teaching Experience and Evaluation Scores

In this section, I provide details about my teaching experience and student evaluations. I append a selection of student comments from my evaluations, which emphasize three core strengths: 1) creating meaningful understanding through strong presentations and effective distillation and explanation of materials; 2) engaging students by promoting inclusivity, adopting dynamic teaching practices, and embracing responsiveness; and 3) helping students develop portable skills such as critical thinking, writing, and data analysis. Finally, I detail proposed courses.

Course Code and Quarter	Course Name	Course Type	Position	Instructor	Effectiveness Score
POLISCI 22SC, Summer 2017	The Face of Battle	Undergraduate Seminar Course with Staff Rides	TA, Staff Ride Organizer	Scott Sagan, Allen Weiner	--
POLISCI 101, Fall 2017	Introduction to International Relations	Undergraduate Lecture	TA	Steve Krasner	4.5/5
POLISCI 101, Fall 2018	Introduction to International Relations	Undergraduate Lecture	TA	James Fearon	4.3/5
URBN 202, Fall 2018	Senior Seminar in Urban Studies	Undergraduate Capstone	TA, Methodology Specialist and Lecturer	Michael Kahan	5/5
POLISCI 101, Fall 2019	Introduction to International Relations	Undergraduate Lecture	TA	Steve Krasner	4.5/5
POLISCI 114S/INTPOL 241/HISTORY 104D, Winter 2018	International Security in a Changing World	Undergraduate and Graduate (MA) Lecture with Multiday Simulation	TA, Simulation Organizer	Scott Sagan, Harold Trinkunas, Gabrielle Hecht	4.4/5
POLISCI 110Y, Spring 2019	War and Peace in American Foreign Policy	Undergraduate Lecture	Remote Learning TA for Continuing Studies Students, "Writing in the Major" Advisor	Kenneth Schultz	--
SPCS Summer 2018	The Ethics of Warfare	Stanford Pre-Collegiate Studies Lecture	Instructor	Lauren Sukin	--
SPCS Summer 2019	The Ethics of Warfare	Stanford Pre-Collegiate Studies Lecture	Instructor	Lauren Sukin	--
SPCS Summer 2020	The Ethics of Warfare	Stanford Pre-Collegiate Studies Online Lecture	Instructor	Lauren Sukin	4.6/5
			Mean Effectiveness Score		4.6/5

Selected Comments from Teaching Evaluations

Creating Meaningful Understanding
- *Strong Presentation Skills*
  - [She] clearly understands material really well. Her presentations are really interesting, and a quick overview of the theories discussed in lecture has been useful.
  - Very good slides and question-answering, clearly extremely well-versed in our class readings as well as lectures.
  - Lauren is always prepared with class activities and questions to foster understanding of crucial concepts; sections are always very helpful.
  - She asks questions, poses problems, and asks for examples which are all helpful tools, and clarifies or provides a more accurate definition if the answer doesn't cover it.
- *Effectively Distilling and Explaining Materials*
  - Lauren was extremely effective in condensing the most important points of the course into section. She always clarified difficult concepts and gave us concise analyses of the papers we read in the course.
  - [Her] biggest strength is answering questions. I think [her] answers were always incredibly clear and concise, and [she] did a great job describing what mattered and why.
  - Lauren knew all the readings and theories inside and out and always had more examples to give when someone didn't understand. She was also very good at pointing out the limitations in our arguments by giving strong counterarguments during group discussions.

Student Engagement
- *Promoting Inclusivity*
  - [The TA's strength was] dedication to engaging all of the students in important discussions and coming up with useful and helpful questions to guide those conversations.
  - The TA does a very good job at starting discussions and keeping them going. She also makes everyone feel comfortable answering, even if they are wrong. She invites us to critique the arguments and papers as well.
  - Lauren is a good discussion leader and gives everyone the opportunity to speak.
- *Engaging in Dynamic Teaching and Active Learning*
  - Lauren not only has a lot of knowledge on the subject, but she is able to teach it clearly and in simple terms. She promotes class discussions, often with questions that don't seem to have answers, making everyone participate. The environment is good, and she makes people comfortable to share their ideas… She tries to make the class as dynamic and interesting as possible.
  - Lauren is constantly engaging the class by asking questions, encouraging conversation, and providing room for us to challenge one another's perspectives.
  - I found Lauren very engaging, and [she] always challenged us to think for ourselves. I really enjoyed the interactive nature of the class and always found myself engaged in what we were discussing. I loved how passionate she was and that this subject was clearly something she knew much about because of her own great interest.

- o For me, the most interesting parts of the class were the lectures given by Lauren. I certainly found these intellectually stimulating and enjoyed the interactive nature of these.
  - o I think the most valuable aspect of the class ended up being [Lauren's] lectures, which were more engaging and interesting than any of my [other] classes.
  - o The interactive elements of the class were very enjoyable and forced me to actively think about what kinds of decisions world leaders make.
- *Embracing Availability and Responsiveness*
  - o She encouraged office hours and answered questions well during that time.
  - o [The TA was] active on Canvas [and] available for office hours. [She was a] great resource for students.
  - o She was extremely attentive to questions and was happy to engage our curiosity in discussions.

Portable Skills
- *Engaging Critical Thinking Skills*
  - o Lauren did a good job of answering questions, presenting work and listening to the class discussions. She was also very helpful in responding to emails, and in one-on-one time, she really tailored her advice to each student's weakness.
  - o Lauren taught me how to be more critical of my own assumptions and was not afraid to challenge my claims (which I thoroughly enjoyed).
  - o She answers questions and explains the material we are talking about well. She also pushes us to critique the arguments and find their weaknesses.
- *Refining Writing Skills*
  - o [I learned from the TA] the ability to develop strong arguments that [address] counterarguments without weakening claims [and] how to incorporate evidence (qualitative and quantitative) into a thesis-driven essay.
  - o Lauren gave precise advice for writing better readings logs and papers which I found very useful.
  - o Lauren was good at explaining what we should look for in our writing. She gave me a framework to write that will be very beneficial for other classes.
  - o [I learned from the TA about] formulating a research thesis and expanding upon it, visualizing an argument and defending the methods… and how to outline a literature review.
  - o Every time after I left a meeting with Lauren, I felt so much more confident with my understanding of the material and my ability to execute the assignments going forward.
- *Improving Data Analysis Skills*
  - o I learned to distill arguments and information from the data that I collected. I also learned through practice the way in which research is an iterative process.
  - o Lauren, the TA, was a great resource for [her] more nuanced understanding of creating a thesis… I felt as though she was the most helpful in understanding how to and where to collect data and how to analyze data.
  - o Lauren was extremely helpful. It was nice to have a TA who specialized [in and] had a better knowledge of quantitative data collection and analysis.

Proposed Courses

All courses can be taught at the undergraduate or graduate level.

Core
- Introduction to International Relations
- Introduction to International Security
- American Foreign Policy
- International Institutions and Global Governance *(Syllabus)*

Methodology
- Introduction to Qualitative Methods
- Introduction to Quantitative Methods
- Introduction to Machine Learning
- Laboratory for Survey Experiments *(Syllabus)*

Seminars
- Nuclear Weapons and International Politics
- Terrorism, Civil War, and Conflict Resolution
- International Security in East Asia
- Security Studies and Emerging Technologies: Cyber Operations, Space Militarization, Drone Warfare, and Artificial Intelligence
- Public Opinion Research and Survey Experiments in International Politics
- The Ethics of Warfare *(Syllabus)*