

Alexander Svitych – Teaching Statement

I am committed to critical and engaged pedagogy. Real critical and creative thought ought to be a problem-generating exercise, rather than a problem-solving one.

Critical pedagogy is an approach which stresses a critical evaluation of common concepts and students' abilities to think critically about their own situations. Engaged pedagogy, in turn, unpacks the complexity and richness of the socio-political reality instead of imposing a single scientific truth. To that end, my pedagogical strategies are geared toward students' self-understanding as both recipients of knowledge and agents of change. "Out-of-box" thinking can and should be stimulated by highlighting connections between theory and practice.

As of today, I have co-taught three courses at the undergraduate level at the Department of Political Science, namely: *Global Governance*, *US Foreign Policy*, and *Introduction to International Relations*. Throughout my teaching, I have emphasized the engaged approach to knowledge acquisition. Whether in small classes or large, I have been dedicated to bringing the insights of political science to students' lived experience, both at the local and global level.

For example, in the *Global Governance* module, I encouraged the students to co-author a letter to the United Nations suggesting amendments to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The class took up the task with dedication and enthusiasm, and eventually received a response from the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In the *US Foreign policy* class, I simulated the Clinton-Trump presidential debates involving multiple stakeholders: journalists, advocacy groups, business lobbies, and concerned citizens. And for the *Intro to International Relations*, I organized a mini panel on environmental change and climate governance, where the delegates had to negotiate, compromise, and commit to reducing carbon emissions.

In all three courses the students nominated me for the Graduate Teaching award, which I won twice in 2016 and 2017. I received multiple positive evaluations, and my teaching rating scored above average both at the department and faculty level. I believe this was possible because I truly enjoy an immersion in diverse environment with students with various backgrounds. In addition, outside the classroom I ran a small informal taekwon-do club on campus for two years. My goal was not only to equip students with a basic martial arts training, but also empower them psychologically in their daily pursuits.

In line with my research training and interests, I am prepared to teach introductory courses on International Relations or World Politics, Comparative Politics, Political Economy, Social Theory, and Research Methods. Furthermore, I would look forward to the opportunity to also develop specialized courses such Globalization and the State, Nationalism and Transnationalism, Party Politics, and Mixed Methods.

In sum, all my pedagogical strategies are dedicated to teaching politics and global affairs in ways that will remain with the students long after they leave my classroom.