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Political Science

Required Number of Semesters: 1-8

Role of Teaching in the Discipline of Political Science

Our discipline is composed of the following subfields: American politics (which includes judicial politics), comparative politics, formal theory, international relations, methodology and normative political theory. In both teaching focused institutions and research universities, professors are generally hired in one of these fields and are expected to teach the introduction course/main service course in their respective field.

As our discipline has become more sophisticated in terms of technical training there is a premium placed on job market candidates who can (and want) to teach classes in methods and formal theory. Our department is especially strong in these two fields and provides ample opportunities for students to gain teaching experience in these fields.

Liberal arts colleges and other teaching centered institutions have slightly different teaching expectations. Students are generally expected to teach a broader range of courses, often across more than one field. For example, many of the positions at liberal arts colleges are looking for faculty to teach both the introduction to international relations and the introduction to comparative politics. Many of the top liberal arts colleges are increasingly looking for candidates to teach an undergraduate methods class.

When applying to either type of job as an assistant professor, candidates are generally required to submit course evaluations and materials related to course content along with material related to their research (dissertation chapters, job market paper, publications, etc).

Pedagogical Preparation

Given the differences in teaching across research and teaching institutions, we conducted an analysis of recent placements. Our placement data shows that the majority of our students are placed in tenure track positions at research universities. Since 2001, 60 percent of our PhDs were initially placed in tenure track positions with 85 percent eventually being placed in a tenure track position. In the last 3 years we have placed 12 out of 12 graduate students. Of these initial placements, four placements were post-docs at research universities, five were tenure track positions at research universities, one is a teaching position, and two are in the private sector. In the past five years we have initially placed 13/33 students in tenure track positions at research universities. Of our 15 non-tenure track academic placements, the overwhelming majority were research based post docs. It has been since the 2011/2012 school year when we last placed a student at a liberal arts school. The explanation for this pattern is that our students prefer jobs at research universities and our department can place students in these positions. In May 2010 our department conducted an anonymous online survey of our graduate students and the results are consistent with this explanation. In the survey we asked our graduate students to select all of the types of jobs they would be interested in after graduation (students may select more than one option). In this survey, 85% of our students indicated interest at research universities and 27% of our Ph.D. students had interest in jobs at liberal arts colleges. In terms of expectations, only 20% of the students ultimately expected to be placed at liberal arts colleges (which is roughly in line with our historical average).

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Given these results we continue to focus our training on achieving excellence in research and teaching at research universities, while providing additional resources to students interested in teaching at liberal arts colleges. While some political science departments have a dedicated course on teaching (28/122 political science programs required graduate students to enroll in a teaching course), recent evaluations of political science graduate programs finds that graduate teaching courses have a limited effect on job placements (faculty productivity is a much stronger predictor) and that dedicated courses on teacher training are very rare in top ranked institutions and are negatively correlated with faculty productivity (See Ishiyama, Miles, and Balarezo. 2010. *Political Science and Politics*, 43, 3: 515-523). While job placement isn't the only criteria for evaluating teaching, it is an objective and measurable outcome that allows us to evaluate our department.

Our main mechanism for teacher training are through hands-on teaching experiences through mentored teaching experiences (MTEs), graduate coursework, field examinations at the end of the second year of study, our department professional development workshop, annual evaluations and faculty mentoring. In the rest of the document I outline the specific steps we take as a department to ensure that our students are highly qualified teachers.

Training through MTEs

The main mechanism for training students as teachers is through MTEs. Throughout their time in the program, students are expected to complete between one and eight MTEs. All students are required to:

1. Participate in an MTE for one of the core, "service" course in the department. These courses include our intro courses (American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Politics, and Political Theory) plus our undergraduate statistics course (Quantitative Political Methodology).
2. Give at least one supervised guest lecture. Students will give a guest lecture supervised by the course instructor, or a faculty member in the same field (American Politics, Comparative Politics, etc).
3. Ensure that students have at least one course with regular interactions with students. This includes running discussion sections (intro courses), help sessions (Quantitative Political Methodology), or leading review sessions.

This assures that students are exposed to the main service courses in the field, have an opportunity to interact with students, and give at least one lecture supervised by a faculty member.

Professional Development Workshop

Our department offers a professional development workshop that is required for all students. This workshop is a monthly meeting that addresses topics related to teaching and research. We have a core set of topics that we cover every year plus a rotating set of topics. After three years, students have been exposed to all of the workshops, including workshops specifically addressing teaching. Each year, a faculty member conducts a workshop on the academic job market. This workshop provides graduate students with an overview of the job market process including where to find job postings, how to produce a dossier, and an overview of the on-campus interview.

Annual Evaluation

The faculty conducts a formal annual review of all graduate students. At the end of each fall term, the DGS solicits student evaluations from each faculty member about each graduate student. A faculty meeting will subsequently be scheduled where each student will be discussed.

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First Year Evaluations

In addition to the annual review, all first-year Ph.D. students will be evaluated by the full faculty based on their class performance near the end of their second semester. Students will meet with the DGS to discuss their performance.

Third Year Evaluations

In a graduate student's third year, the faculty will also conduct a thorough review based on their performance on the qualifying exam and in their courses, the third year paper, and their progress towards a dissertation prospectus.

Additional Opportunities

For students that express interests in jobs at liberal arts colleges or other teaching centered jobs we offer the following additional opportunities:

- We provide opportunities for students to take advantage of the workshops at the teaching center and consider the completion of the Teaching Center's Teaching Citation.
- We also offer our students the opportunity to teach through University College, although the Director of Graduate Studies (in consultation with the faculty) assures that the student is capable to teach the class and is in good standing (including zero incompletes).

Teaching and the Job Market

The Director of Graduate Studies consults with each student on the job market about their job search strategy. The Chair of the department and/or the DGS reviews the letters of recommendation for coherence and appropriate attention to both addressing the student's research and teaching ability. We require all students on the academic job market to give at least one practice job talk in front of the full faculty. Students receiving interview offers from liberal arts colleges also may present a practice classroom lecture to the full faculty along with a research talk.

Sequence of Teaching Opportunities for PhD Students

The main mechanism for training students as teachers is through MTEs. Throughout their time in the program, students are expected to complete between one and eight MTEs. All students are required to:

4. Participate in an MTE for one of the core, "service" course in the department. These courses include our intro courses (American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Politics, and Political Theory) plus our undergraduate statistics course (Quantitative Political Methodology).
5. Give at least one supervised guest lecture. Students will give a guest lecture supervised by the course instructor, or a faculty member in the same field (American Politics, Comparative Politics, etc).
6. Ensure that students have at least one course with regular interactions with students. This includes running discussion sections (intro courses), help sessions (Quantitative Political Methodology), or leading review sessions.

This assures that students are exposed to the main service courses in the field, have an opportunity to interact with students, and give at least one lecture supervised by a faculty member

We strive to have our students on the job market by year five. Some students conducting field research may take an extra year to complete their dissertation and go on the market in year 6. During year 1,

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students focus on course work. In years 2-4/5 students participate in MTEs and/or MREs in their substantive research area. During their final year (5 or 6), students focus on completing their dissertations.