

# Jelle Koedam | Teaching Statement

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## Teaching philosophy

My teaching philosophy centers on three goals. First, I aim for students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to analyze political events systematically. I teach students to be critical thinkers who are able to evaluate independently political processes, politicians' statements, and news media coverage. By equipping students with these skills, I give them the opportunity to formulate informed and nuanced political opinions, and dare them to challenge their own prior beliefs.

Second, I help students learn to value diversity in political views by promoting an environment of mutual respect that fosters political dialogue. My students come from diverse backgrounds, and through group assignments and class discussions they learn to understand and appreciate differences of opinion. By allowing my students to observe and experience the benefits of ideological diversity, I hope they will develop into engaged, politically interested citizens who will actively participate in public life going forward.

Third, my teaching provides a foundation for my students' educational and professional progress and success, irrespective of their particular backgrounds and level of expertise. I rely on a variety of teaching methods to develop their speaking, reading, and writing skills; skills which will benefit them for years to come, regardless of their respective academic or professional pursuits.

In order to achieve these goals and be an effective teacher, I continue to evaluate and improve my own performance by incorporating evidence-based teaching methods. To this end, I formulate clear goals for the overall course as well as each individual lesson, teach both foundational knowledge and a deeper understanding of the course material, supplement lectures and readings with non-verbal, graphical ways to present key concepts and theories, and constantly promote active participation in the classroom.

To provide some illustrative examples, I use graphics to teach about concepts such as populism, as opposed to textual definitions, and set up in-class simulations as a way to familiarize students with different electoral systems. Moreover, I employ live personal response systems (using "clickers" or students' mobile devices) to facilitate interactive participation and discussion, e.g. through quizzes or word clouds. My students have praised my ability to avoid jargon, make complex concepts accessible, and alternate teaching methods. Finally, in the past I have also assigned students to be semester-long representatives of one of the countries covered in class. I then call on them as 'country experts' over the course of the semester, which challenges them to apply the lesson content to 'their' respective countries, and promotes their sense of ownership of the material. All of these techniques are meant to encourage student participation and lead students to process and retain course material more effectively.

As for my own role in the classroom, I believe that a comfortable, relatively informal environment is most conducive to a dynamic relationship of mutual respect with and between my students. For that reason, I learn my students' names as quickly as possible, use humor to engage with them, and share personal experiences, interests, and research as part of my teaching. I believe that these qualities are reflected in my teaching evaluations (see below) because, in addition to my expertise, my students most frequently emphasize my enthusiasm, approachability, conscientiousness, and the comfortable classroom atmosphere.

## Teaching interests

I am interested in teaching a variety of courses in the field of comparative politics. At the undergraduate level, I especially enjoy teaching introductory classes on European politics and the European Union. While my own research is primarily focused on party politics in advanced industrial democracies, I am also excited and qualified to teach about authoritarianism, democratization, state formation, and regime change in developing democracies, for instance in Eastern Europe and the Middle East (see below for my teaching experience).

Furthermore, I am interested in teaching more specialized courses on parties and elections, public opinion, and contentious politics, among others. In the future, I would like to teach a class on the contemporary challenges to representative democracy, covering topics such as extremist politics, populism, forms of direct democracy, and the (alleged) erosion of the modern state. Finally, I also have an interest in teaching research methodology and introductory statistics, and truly enjoy supervising students' research projects, both at the undergraduate and graduate level. I am excited to advise students who are writing their honors theses, dissertations, or otherwise.

## Teaching experience

My graduate training at UNC Chapel Hill has prepared me to teach a variety of political science courses. I have been the sole undergraduate instructor for six classes on comparative and European politics, both on-campus and online, with class sizes varying from fifteen to 45. As a teaching assistant, I have led recitations for large-scale lectures on Eastern Europe, Western Europe, American government, as well as a more specialized course on the politics of the death penalty in the United States. At the VU University Amsterdam, I co-supervised an undergraduate thesis seminar for which I advised students on their individual research projects and led workshops on research design.

I acquired additional teaching experiences through my involvement with the Center for European Studies at UNC. As part of the center's "EU2U" outreach program, which aims to educate teachers in North Carolina about the European Union and European politics, I taught multiple interactive workshops for up to 25 K-12 and community college educators, covering topics ranging from the EU's history and institutions to populism and the Brexit referendum. Teachers reported great appreciation for these sessions, as it made them more prepared and comfortable to teach about European politics and the EU in their own courses.