

CHRISTIAN SELLAR – STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My primary teaching interest is in the areas of regional economic/social development, political and economic governance, international political economy and institutional change. I focus on the integration of the European Union, the transformation of border policies caused by globalization, and the role of foreign direct investments in triggering economic and political change. My teaching draws on political geography, economic geography, regional geography, sociology and political economy.

My teaching has been heavily influenced and shaped by the opportunity to work with colleagues and students in the United States, Italy and Russia. My undergraduate and Ph.D. studies in Italy, along with teaching experience in Russia, accustomed me to lecturing and to the idea that a good teacher is able to set a relatively high bar in order to let each student feel positively challenged but not frustrated. My experiences in the United States – where I currently serve as an associate professor in an interdisciplinary public policy program, after time as a visiting lecturer in geography – taught me to be inclusive rather than exclusive; to structure my teaching around clearly defined goals and objectives; and to adopt different teaching methods in large vs. small classes. When possible, I am a strong advocate of discussion-oriented classes and role-playing exercises geared towards the adoption of specific skills. I use a mix of scholarly articles, textbooks, visual materials and news articles; and I put an emphasis on student research (syllabi upon request).

I am an advocate of mixing traditional lecture and flipped classroom methodologies. Before a typical day of class, students are invited to engage with the class materials through assignments that stimulate a critical engagement with the text, purposefully selected to alternate between harder-to-read scholarly materials designed to challenge with other readings and videos intended to capture attention. The assignments – typically a series of open ended questions, but also questions about the text generated by students – are designed to guide students to search for specific notions or evaluate arguments in the text. In a typical day of class, I open by emphasizing the learning objectives, followed by a group exercise in which students share their homework and reach a common agreement on the meaning of the text. My lecture follows and builds upon students' discussions. In so doing, my teaching style is as interactive as possible, encouraging students to develop knowledge through reasoning, deduction and in-class discussion. I often include in-class exercises or homework aimed at applying the concepts studied in class to real world situations.

I believe in the importance of the establishment of clear standards from the first day of class. In my experience as a student and a TA, I found that stating clearly how the class is structured, what its goals are and how and why students are evaluated are effective ways to convey respect. In turn, this helps to establish a trusting relationship between the teacher and the student. I found this to be a powerful tool for teacher self-improvement, because it provides a low pressure atmosphere in which the students feel comfortable in giving productive feedback about the classroom work.

I especially enjoy supervising honors theses in both public policy and international studies. My thesis work is structured around a seminar in which students first learn the basics of thesis writing, structure writing goals, and then share their works in progress. The seminar combines students' peer review and individual mentoring. When possible, I prefer working with students who have an applicative or policy content to their work. For example my first honors thesis, Stewart Hood's *Abruzzan wine importation: possibilities for stronger commercial ties between the Italian region of Abruzzo and Mississippi* resulted in a startup business, 'Hood Imports,' that was subsequently closed when Stewart moved on to pursue graduate education in business.

At the University of Mississippi, I teach a range of undergraduate courses in public policy. In my early years at the university, I also taught introductory courses in international studies, such as *Introduction to International Studies* and *Introduction to Europe*. In my department, I taught *Introduction to Public Policy*. I currently teach *Public Policies of the European Union*, *Public Policy and the Corporation*, *Economic Geographies of Globalization*, and *Global Border Policies*. At the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, I taught *World Regional Geography* and *People and Places* – an introductory level course in human geography and I served as a teaching assistant in a variety of courses in human geography and international studies. My approach is generally well-received by students. For example, in 2017 the annual evaluation by my department chair reads as follows: "Christian taught three courses (PPL 328, 330 & 388) in fall 2016 and two courses (PPL 329 & 330) in spring 2017. All these courses were well received by students. For instance, in the rating of his overall performance for his courses in fall 2016, his averages were 38.45% superior, 30.72% excellent, and 22.99% very good." Because I was on sabbatical in 2015, I did not receive specific teaching evaluations. The previous year, my evaluation included "Christian taught three courses (PPL 329, 388 & 498) in spring 2014 and three courses (PPL 328, 330 & 388) in fall 2014. All these courses were well received by students. For instance, in the rating of his overall performance for his courses in fall 2014, his averages were 61.54% superior and 23.08% excellent for PPL 328, 63.64% superior and 36.36% excellent for PPL 330, and 77.78% superior and 22.22% excellent for PPL 388.

Teaching experiences

At the University of Mississippi, I contributed to the establishment of the major in Public Policy Leadership by developing four new courses: the first is *Public Policies of the European Union*, which analyzes Government policies at the EU, national, and local levels, highlighting how policies constitute the pivotal points between identity politics – specifically the contested emergence of a European identity – and tangible economic changes, with specific reference to the post-socialist transformation of Central Eastern Europe. The second is *Public Policy and the Corporation*, which examines policy issues related to the manner in which various types of corporations are regulated at the local, national and global level; and the third is *Economic Geographies of Globalization*, which introduces public policy students to geographers' discussions of globalization, and the fourth is *Global Border Policies*, which starts with discussing how theoretical approaches to border studies developed in the 20th and early 21st Century, followed by an application of these theories to specific border areas, such as US-Canada, US-Mexico, and the ways in which the European Union manages its borders. The course concludes with a policy analysis exercise in which students discuss a US policy of their choice that impacts cross-border flows. Besides my work in my home department, I also taught

introductory level courses (*Introduction to International Studies* and *Introduction to Europe*) at the Croft Institute for International Studies.

At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I taught *World Regional Geography* and *People and Places* as a visiting lecturer. During my Ph.D. studies I served as teaching assistant in *Geography and International Studies*. In the Department of Geography, my primary duties were exams and paper grading and advising students in the development of research papers. I held lectures as well. I worked with instructors of *World Regional Geography*, *Developing World* and *Political Geography*. In the Department of International Studies I held recitation sections for the course *Global Issues*. In each section, topics and readings from the class were discussed and deepened.

At the University of Trieste (Italy), I was a teaching assistant in *Political and Economic Geography* and *Geography of Oil Production*. My primary duties were assisting with exams and giving occasional lectures. I also worked as a tutor for *Communications Studies* and *Techniques of Advertising* as well. My primary duties were advising students in developing their curriculum and to create more effective communication between faculty and students.

At Moscow State Linguistic University (Russia), I was a lecturer of Italian in the curriculum of Interpreting and Translation and Economics. In interpreting and translation, I taught conversation and reading in Italian to 2nd and 3rd year students while in economics I developed my own seminar in public law and news language for advanced (4th year) students.

Annexes

Syllabi and student comments available upon request.