

Leanne C. Powner
Evidence of Instructional Effectiveness and
Summary of Evaluations

I began teaching as a Visiting Assistant Professor at the College of Wooster, Wooster, OH, in August 2008. Formal teaching evaluations for these courses will not be available until late January, 2009. During AY 2007-2008 I served as a concentration advisor for the Department of Political Science at the University of Michigan and a general academic advisor for the UM Honors Program. In AY 2006-2007 I was on fellowship and did not teach. As a result, the teaching evaluations presented below are outdated. Additional materials are available to demonstrate teaching effectiveness and/or excellence; please email me at LPowner@wooster.edu if these items are not enclosed in your packet and you would like copies.

I had the opportunity to teach for nine terms at the University of Michigan, including one summer course as the primary instructor. Teaching did not come easily to me, and my earliest terms were very difficult for both me and my students. To help bridge that gap, I developed a wide range of activities and support resources, such as handouts and homework assignments, to help introduce and reinforce main ideas and critical skills. My efforts did not go unnoticed; my evaluation scores rose over time, and in 2005 the Department of Political Science honored me with the John Kingdon Award for Outstanding Teaching. My collection of resources came to the attention of others, including editors at CQ Press, who invited me to lead the revision of a student workbook to accompany one of their texts. Finally, in 2008 I received a university-wide Rackham Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award.

Political Science 160 Introduction to World Politics

I served as a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI, teaching assistant function) in PS 160 for seven terms. During four of those terms, I was the Administrative Assistant (lead GSI); in this capacity I worked with new instructors on pedagogy and developed content activities for discussion sections.

My evaluations improved substantially during my time in this course. In early terms, inexperience and insecurity in the classroom hurt substantially. As I developed confidence with the material and improved my ability to articulate my expectations, my evaluations rose; when my grading rubric was adopted coursewide, my evaluations rose considerably. The scores are still not where I'd like them to be, but I was happy to see continuing improvement. Even despite the relatively low scores, I regularly built strong relationships with individual students, who returned frequently after the course for mentoring and advising.

Item (5 pt scale)	Best Term	Median Term
Excellent section.	4.06	3.00
Excellent teacher.	4.14	3.25
I learned a lot.	4.39	3.83
Gives clear explanations.	4.33	3.55
Stresses important points.	4.64	3.89
Knowledgeable.	4.95	4.55
Willing to meet out of class.	4.95	4.91
Has high standards.	4.95	4.91
Gives specific writing feedback.	4.61	4.00

Comments from Student Email:

I wanted to thank you for such a wonderful semester. You pushed me harder than I thought I could go and I really took so much out of the class. -- Stefanie S.

I'm just writing to let you know that I'd like to sign up for the mock final exam on the 17th. Also, thanks for taking the time to do this trial exam! It's such a helpful form of test preparation, and I think all the students really appreciate the extra effort you put into these sessions. Thanks, Justine S (*not enrolled in one of my discussion sections*)

I learned a lot in your class. Not having grades inflated also helps you determine where you really are on understanding the concepts. -- Tim B.

I think you created a great atmosphere for class discussions, so I thank you for that--it made class engaging, interesting, and fun, and I would actually look forward to it => (which is rare at michigan). -- Katie D.

I'm in econ 401 now and we're starting off with game theory. I wanted to let you know that you introduced it, and the various common games, very well, which I am now appreciating quite a bit. Watching my professor try to explain the prisoner's dilemma today was...painful. So I thank you for that. -- Juhi A.

Political Science 140 Introduction to Comparative Politics

This was my first course as the sole instructor. I was responsible for course design, syllabus planning, assessment, reading selection, etc. A number of personal and professional factors (4 weeks' notice to prepare course from scratch, etc.) fed into the course's poor outcome. I was unaware that most of the students were in their first college term rather than rising sophomores, and I overestimated the amount of material we could cover in a condensed course format (2 hrs a day, 4 days a week). I did form continuing relationships with several students, as the comment below suggests, but overall the course did not go well. I have since re-vamped the course based on this experience, and incorporated what I learned into my teaching in other courses as well.

Item (5 pt scale)	Summer 2004
Excellent course.	1.46
Excellent teacher.	1.46
I learned a lot.	3.22
Gave clear explanations	2.31

Comment from Unsigned Student Evaluation:

Thank you again for a great class. No matter what happens with the Business School, your class has sparked my interest in Political Science. Polsci will most likely be my major if I don't get in, and even if I do I will still keep it up possibly double majoring or minoring in polisci. So, you will definitely [sic] be hearing from me in the future! – Anonymous.

Political Science 343 Political Economy of Developed Democracies

I was the Upper-Level Writing Instructor for this course, which was taught by Rob Franzese. I had primary responsibility for fleshing out the paper assignments that Rob developed and designing student support materials for them. My primary task, for which I received extensive training through the University's Sweetland Writing Center, was to work closely with students on their writing. Students wrote two ten-page papers during the term and revised both. I had full responsibility for designing the grading rubric and evaluating the written work. I also held extensive office hours to conference with students on their ideas and writing.

No student evaluations are available from this course; writing GSIs are not evaluated separately from the primary instructor.

Advising and Mentoring

In the summers of 2007 and 2008 I was an Academic Advisor for the College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA) Honors Program. I primarily worked with incoming freshmen and continuing sophomores, and also with students who are pursuing Honors Concentrations (upper-division honors work with a thesis component). Responsibilities included counseling students on course decisions, curriculum and major options, graduate school and careers, and other academic matters. I also participated extensively in the Honors Program admissions decision-making process, reviewing files and recommending admission.

Overall Freshman Orientation Advisor Rating	5-point scale
2007	4.33
2008	4.13

2008 numbers are probably slightly lower than 2007 because of a smaller number of students; students were also informed that I would not be advising in the fall and several commented on that in the evaluations. Perhaps the best measures of success in this capacity were the substantial fraction of students who contacted me after their orientation with questions (about 1/3, which is quite high compared to other advisors), and that they regularly recommended me to their Honors friends. Incoming freshmen commented in their anonymous exit survey:

Ms. Powner advised which classes were better to take and which were more competitive ... On subjects where she could not advise me on as of yet, such as Japanese, she directed me to someone who could. (Rating: 5)

It would have been nice to be given more options, ranging from heavy courseloads to lighter ones ... My advisor was still great and still helped me a lot! (Rating: 4)

My experience was great because I felt like Leanne really made an effort to look at who I was and what I wanted to do in order to help me choose the best classes. (Rating: 5)

My advisor was awesome. :] (Rating: 5)

I look forward to collaborating with her in the future. (Rating: 4)

...I seem to interact better with warmer, more motherly people, I guess But in the end, she did an excellent job getting my schedule to straighten out and confirm everything. I am very confident after having her as an advisor. (Rating: 4)

Very helpful, original, engaging. (Rating: 5)

Two of my Honors students also nominated me for the University's Sinclair Award for outstanding academic advising. One of the nominations had this to say:

[Leanne] recommends professors and classes for me that have all turned out wonderful; I completely trust her judgment. ... I really don't think that my first year at U of M would have been the same without her advising, and I am going to miss her help this year. ... Leanne is a wonderful advisor, and I think that [the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts] will be lacking something next year when she is gone. (Thank you, Leanne!)

In AY 2007-2008, I was a Concentration Academic Advisor for the Department of Political Science. No formal evaluations are available. In this capacity, I was nominated for the Department's Outstanding Concentration Advisor award. Prior to this formal appointment, I engaged in a substantial amount of informal mentoring, primarily of my former students in Intro to World Politics. One of them had this to say after his graduation and acceptance to law school:

Again thank you for all your help, advice, and guidance [sic]. I truly listen to what you tell me. I can't stress enough how much it is appreciated that you are willing to stay in touch with your former students and help out when you can. – Brandon, former PS 160 student

Instructional Materials and Publications

Feedback and reviews of my instructional materials are generally quite positive. Reviewers of *Applying the Strategic Perspective* (3rd edition, CQ Press, 2005) and its associated online support and ancillaries comment:

“Students are told of the existence of a companion website during the term. Some students use this additional resource, whereas others do not. Those who have used the site often note the helpfulness of sample questions and quizzes.... The textbook support and companion website are excellent and more than sufficient.”

“I found the workbook useful, though I believe more and better (i.e. fully worked out) examples for some of the more difficult modeling problems should be included in either the main text or workbook.”

“I did assign the workbook. It works very well. I assigned problems from most chapters. The students never complained about the work, so it must have been helpful.” -- anonymous reviewer quotes provided by CQ Press

My article in *PS: Political Science and Politics* generated several favorable email responses.

“Thank you for your recent article in PS. I am an incoming faculty member who will be teaching a methods course and I found your article very helpful.” – new faculty member in Washington, DC

Other users of my course support documents (posted on my old website, <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~lpowner>) have emailed:

Dear Leanne (if I may),

I have begun to use some of your teaching materials. Your site is a genuine resource and you have clearly thought through this in important ways. Just wanted to say, “Thanks!”

Cheers, Ed S. -- faculty member at a Canadian university

Your how to read a political science article handout is a GODSEND.

Sarah C. -- new faculty member at an American university.