

This document summarizes evidence of my effectiveness as a teaching assistant in the University of Southern California's Department of Political Science for Politics 130: Law, Politics, and Public Policy in fall 2016 and spring 2017.

For the 2016-2017 academic year, my colleague Mayagüez Salinas and I were named the best teaching assistants in the Political Science and International Relations (POIR) Ph.D. Program. In addition to having compelling qualitative evidence of teaching ability, we had the highest ratings on student course evaluations among teaching assistants. I later received a USC Award for Excellence in Teaching and was nominated for the USC Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award.

A note from the POIR Program Director

"She 'listen[s] to diverging opinions' while 'validating voices' and 'challenging assumptions.' 'Passionate,' 'brilliant,' and making 'a difference in her students' lives.' These are the words students use to describe Kelly Zvobgo, one of the best teaching assistants in several years in the political science department in USC Dornsife [...] Her approach to undergraduate education is superb. In her discussion sections, Zvobgo has emphasized a teaching philosophy and method of reflection, deliberation, and revision. In her assignments and discussions, she encourages students to use these techniques to learn so they can deeply understand, rather than simply memorize, the material and texts. Outside of the classroom, Zvobgo has identified and worked with the most promising undergraduates, including many first-generation students and students of color. She is a teacher, a leader, and a mentor."

– Dr. Christian R. Grose, Director, USC Political Science and International Relations, 2015-2018

Quantitative scores for "How would you rate this teaching assistant?"

Mean: 4.5

Median: 5

Mode: 5

Notes: Out of 5 possible points. Scores pooled across all sections. $N = 70$.

Qualitative responses to "What were this teaching assistant's main strengths?"

Ability to clarify concepts and prepare helpful supplementary material

- Kelly did a great job of condensing the massive amounts of information from lecture into understandable, relevant, and interesting portions. She was really great about balancing information she had to get to with our many questions. Kelly was an integral part to the brilliance of this class overall, and without her in discussion section I would have been lost and lacking valuable insight and understanding. She re-explained many topics of lecture but also got us to consider events with varying perspectives. She was great at listening to diverging opinions and validating voices while challenging assumptions. Honestly it really helped my coping with the elections to go to lecture the next day. While exuding understanding for people with different opinions, she managed to hold a safe space to feel vulnerable about the results and implications of the election. Kelly has been great

about office hours, advice, and lesson information and clearly has a vast understanding of both international and (though she often offered disclaimers) American politics, and more importantly the interactions, implications, and impacts of policies. (2016)

- Her commitment to helping us understand the material and her enthusiasm while doing it. She was willing to go over topics many times until we understood them and she always was positive about what she was teaching. During office hours Kelly gave really great answers to questions about papers. (2017)
- She was willing to work with the specific discussion section to help the students understand the concepts explored in class holistically, making the class much more clear. She was an absolute pleasure to have as a TA. (2016)
- She was passionate and explained the material in relatively simple terms. She also was very responsive when we had questions and answered e-mails in a timely manner. (2016)
- She is passionate and knowledgeable about the subject matter and relayed information to us in a coherent way. (2017)

Ability to facilitate group discussions

- She was very passionate about what she was teaching. We were able to go into very thought provoking and insightful topics. She did a good job at dealing with very difficult and controversial issues. She helped explain the field and study. (2016)
- Very good at answering questions in a helpful way. Great at guiding and encouraging meaningful class discussion. (2016)
- She was very organized in her lesson plans and really encouraged discussion. (2017)
- She clearly knew the course material well and gave useful insight while spurring on discussions. (2016)
- Led very informative discussions and was very accessible for questions. (2016)

Ability to teach concepts through activities and examples

- Incredible at breaking down complicated concepts from lecture. Was always willing to answer any question, was always equipped with examples to apply our concepts to, and always showed up to class with a smile and an eagerness to teach. (2017)
- She is very enthusiastic and knowledgeable. She encourages us and challenges us with discussion and gets most of the class involved. She brings practical examples to explain things really clearly. (2016)

Commitment to helping students succeed in their academic lives

- This was the best discussion section I've had. Kelly always engaged us in intellectual discussions to explain the material, and let us ask questions and express our opinions. She was very approachable and willing to help in all cases, and gave me great advice when doing my research paper. Even though I am not super interested in law, she made this class very interesting and was able to explain things to me (break it down so that I fully understood). She was always very energetic and passionate about the material and I really respect her. (2016)
- Very knowledgeable about the content and truly cares that student learn and understand the material being presented to them. (2017)
- Kelly is a great teaching assistant. She is passionate about the topic and always brings a positive attitude to class. It is clear that Kelly only wants her students to do the best they can and she is always available for help. I am always excited to come to discussion because of her. (2016)

- Patient. Accessible via emails. Funny and engaging. Care[s] about students' understanding and progress on papers a lot. (2017)
- Kelly was always more than willing to help and assist with all our midterms, finals, and papers. She was always enthusiastic and passionate about what she taught and really aspired to make a difference in her students' lives. (2016)
- Articulating the material, answering any questions, being available during office hours, and giving extremely clear, outlined, explained feedback on papers and assignments (was very clear about exactly why points were taken off and what was done well or needed to be improved). (2017)