

Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness

Student Evaluations

Undergraduate students at Rice University evaluate their instructors based on aspects such as preparation and classroom organization. The evaluation scale ranges from 1 to 5, where lower values indicate higher evaluations: 1 indicates “Outstanding,” 2 “Good,” 3 “Average”, 4 “Fair,” and 5 “Poor.” I find that I maintained high ratings across all categories. Notably, I received the highest marks for the atmosphere category, indicating that I effectively created a classroom setting that fostered “respect, support, civility, and equitable treatment for all members.”

Table 1: Instructor Evaluation from Students

	Section 1 Mean	Section 2 Mean
Organization	1.88	1.67
Presentation	2.38	2.00
Responsiveness	1.69	1.44
Atmosphere	1.25	1.56
Independence	1.56	1.78
Stimulation	2.00	2.00
Knowledge	1.69	1.78
Effectiveness	2.19	1.89
Responsibility	1.33	1.33

Below, I include comments submitted by students from my time as an instructor of record and as a TA for introduction to international relations. Reviews highlight how I created an environment where students felt safe to exchange ideas and engage in critical discourse. Students emphasized the clarity of my instruction and that they felt comfortable asking questions when they needed assistance.

Table 2: Selection of Teaching Evaluations from Students

Instructor	Teaching Assistant (Semester 1)	Teaching Assistant (Semester 2)
<p>“Conner's teaching was vital to understanding R, across the board no matter the coding background Conner was able to teach us the coding necessary for SOSC 302. Though a lot of the work is initially trial and error, when a student needed assistance Conner went above and beyond to make himself available for office hours.”</p> <p>“Conner was wonderful considering how much we had to rely on his expertise regarding R. He gave adequate office hours and was flexible and willing to put a LOT of time to help us despite being an overworked and busy PhD student.”</p> <p>“Conner was so helpful! Great instructor. Answered all my questions about R”</p>	<p>“Overall, Conner was one of the best TA's I could possibly imagine. Before coming into this class, I had never written a Political Science paper. After talking with Conner and attending his office hours, he explained the important fundamentals of writing a Political Science paper in this class. In addition, Conner would clearly explain topics, and, most importantly, teach us how they apply at the global scale and inside of our analysis. Even when discussions on complex topics became difficult, Conner effectively led the classroom by keeping us engaged with the topic. The discussions felt a perfect balance of guidance from Conner while allowing our discussion group to share our opinions on a certain subject collaboratively.”</p> <p>“Conner has been one of the best TAs I've had at Rice so far. He was always super helpful in giving advice on essays, assignments, and the course and was always available to answer any questions I had. His discussion sections were also very good and helped me get a deeper understanding of the materials presented in the lecture and in the readings. I really appreciated having a smaller discussion section to voice opinions and arguments and I think Conner did a good job in making sure the discussions were productive.”</p> <p>“Attentive and caring. He really wanted us to understand the content of the class and would come with a positive attitude every week.”</p>	<p>“I have really enjoyed having Conner as my TA for this class. He was very helpful whenever I had questions and was both very knowledgeable in the field as a whole. He would pose questions to the class and then respond accordingly to each and every students thoughts in way that benefited the knowledge of the entire class. Another thing that I really enjoyed and benefited from was the connections that Conner often made between the class and the professional field of political science. This allowed a holistic understanding of the information we were consuming as it connected concepts that sometimes seemed to be theoretical and non-applicable to the real world to international relations. I would highly recommend Conner and thought that he did a wonderful job.”</p> <p>“REALLY good TA, I loved Conner, he was great and really seemed to both love and know what he was talking about. He was very quick about getting assignments back to us and had really available office hours.”</p> <p>“I enjoyed my discussion section. The TA was helpful and engaged. He asked interesting questions during the discussion section that helped me understand the material. He also explained things in a more comprehensive way than was done in class at times, often providing examples. I liked the way he listened to our answers, added on to them, and provided feedback.”</p>

Faculty Evaluations

Below, I include assessments by faculty during my time as an instructor of record. I also include an evaluation of my role as a Graduate Mentor for the SOPA Major.

"I attended Conner Joyce's POLI 102 (2-2:50mm Friday), on Sept 15. In this lab section, Conner used a projector to share his computer screen with students and demonstrated on the computer throughout the course. In the first half of the class, he went over the previous homework in great detail. He explained step by step the correct way to do the problems and asked questions while doing so. In the second half, he lectured on new content and the amount was appropriate for the time. I learned from my conversation with him afterwards that he had prepared the script of his operations on the computer and shared it with the students in advance. This is an excellent practice. Conner's explanations were clear and the students were able to follow and engaged. They answered his questions correctly and also felt comfortable enough to ask many questions. He was knowledgeable and handled all the questions with confidence and satisfaction of the students. He had excellent rapport with the students. Overall, the instructor gave very clear demonstration and the class was easy to follow. Conner Joyce is an excellent instructor. He knows the teaching materials really well, instructs clearly, and has friendly attitudes toward the students. The classroom atmosphere was relaxing and students were engaged."

Songying Fang, Associate Professor of Political Science at Rice University

"Conner had great rapport with his students. Students were comfortable asking him questions about the complex statistical software, and Conner welcomed their questions. He was gracious in guiding them through the software. Conner set up the class using a guiding research question, which helped connect the statistical test to their discipline in Political Science. Conner was well-prepared for class. He had his coding ready and uploaded into Canvas. He had created a guiding research question and knew how to show students the statistical technique. Conner used a guided practice technique to show his students how to calculate a t-test in R. Conner was able to answer student questions using alternative coding from memory. This shows that he knows the material very well and is able to think creatively to solve problems that the students might encounter."

Todd Ferguson, Assistant Teaching Professor of Sociology at Rice University

"Conner Joyce served as a Social Policy Analysis (SOPA) Capstone project mentor during the academic year of 2024-25. The SOPA Capstone is a year-long program that provides undergraduate SOPA majors with hands-on experience conducting research on social policy design, evaluation, and implementation. Students work in teams of 4-5 on a year-long research project with a community partner organization and a graduate student project mentor. Conner advised two projects: one with Brady: United Against Gun Violence and another with the Wren Collective. He provided outstanding support to both of his student teams, guiding them through the research process and helping them successfully complete and communicate their findings."

A key role for SOPA Capstone project mentors is to advise teams on their research design and data analysis. Conner served as a valuable resource to his teams in the design and implementation of their projects. The Brady team designed and fielded a survey of healthcare professionals. The student had very little prior experience working with writing and fielding a survey. The team relied heavily on Conner's expertise in the writing of their survey, completing their IRB, and implementing their survey. Conner came prepared to meetings with notes on how to improve the survey, advised on their IRB submission materials, and answered questions about the practical implementation of the survey in Qualtrics. In working with both his teams, Conner asked questions that pushed his teams to critically think through their research designs. This helped the students make analysis plans that clearly communicated the

connection between their project goals, research questions, and proposed analyses. In the spring semester, Conner advised both teams on their data analysis, answering questions about coding in R and helping teams filter through results to identify interesting and relevant findings. His feedback allowed for the students to construct well-crafted presentations and reports that communicated the narrative of their project and highlighted important insights for their community partners.

Throughout the Capstone Program, Conner did a wonderful job mentoring his student teams through the research process. It was clear to his teams that he was an available resource, not the manager of their project. He did a great job of gently guiding his teams through decisions with his insightful questions. Additionally, he provided teams with valuable insight on project management, reminding teams to not only think about the work that needed to be done but also how to organize the work and provide realistic assessments on how long tasks would take. In answering student questions, Conner demonstrated a balanced approach to mentoring, knowing when to provide a direct answer and when to explain the options available to students. This allowed for his teams to feel agency and ownership over the project while still feeling supported in this experience.

SOPA Capstone projects require coordination and collaboration among a diverse group of participants, including members of the undergraduate student team, their community partner, and faculty course instructors. The graduate student project mentors often play an intermediary role between the participants, working to facilitate communication and effective collaboration. Conner was invaluable in this role. In working with one partner organization, Conner helped his students navigate suggestions from partners and changes in partner expectations. Conner would often debrief with his teams for a few minutes after their meetings with the community partner to clarify any confusion and help teams identify next steps. Additionally, Conner provided valuable insight into the communication of research findings. He pushed one team to stretch their data skills and construct a heat map, encouraging them that it would be the best visual for the point they wanted to communicate. This turned out to be a highly effective visual in their presentation to the community partner. Throughout the program, Conner demonstrated his ability to translate between quantitative data work and the public policy space, helping his teams incorporate the perspective and interests of the community partner into their research designs and then assisting teams in effectively identifying and communicating the results that would be most meaningful to the policy goals of their community partner.

This was our inaugural year of having graduate students serve in a role that had previously been filled by faculty members. Conner performed this role exceptionally well, and his contributions were essential to the success of the student teams.”

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