

TLC at APSA 2022: Teaching Political Science in a Post-Pandemic Era, In Review

JULIO F. CARRIÓN | UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
ALLISON RANK | STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT OSWEGO

The fifth “TLC at APSA,” the teaching and learning conference-within-a-conference, took place September 17, 2022, in Montreal, Québec, Canada as part of the APSA Annual Meeting. As with previous events, this was an opportunity to gather the growing community of scholars dedicated to improving political science education. Democracy requires functioning institutions and an informed and engaged citizenry. As a community that values undergraduate education and wants to find innovative ways to better educate our students, our goal is to help them become better citizens by stressing the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and civic engagement. The organization of the day-long conference reflects this spirit. The day was divided into a series of workshops (held in the morning) and panels (during the afternoon). The panels were organized around four tracks: 1) Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom; 2) Simulations and games; 3) Civic engagement; and 4) Teaching research, writing, and information literacy. Summaries of each track’s discussions are provided below.

The conference’s theme this year was “Teaching Political Science in a Post-Pandemic Era.” Our experiences in the classrooms during this past year and a half tell us that we are experiencing a new moment in undergraduate education. Students and faculty are facing new challenges related to diminishing resources, overwork, the physical and mental legacies of the pandemic, and the consequences of uneven online learning, among others. How to reconnect with our students—while we rethink and restructure our teaching in the post-pandemic era—is a central question we confront. Responding to our call for proposals, our workshops and panels approached this challenge from diverse and innovative perspectives to improve quantitative reasoning, problem-solving, critical and analytical thinking, communication skills, global/intercultural fluency, leadership and teamwork, and accessibility. All participants and presenters took care in engaging fruitfully and thoughtfully in the discussions throughout the day.

The morning workshops discussed a range of issues central to the mission of teaching in a post-pandemic era, and we can only briefly note them here: how to facilitate equity and access in the classroom, the use of DiploSim in International Relations courses, how to create a safe and challenging learning environment, the role of Political Science Honor Societies in engaging students, the foundational principles of antiracist pedagogy, the design of role-playing simulations in remote and hybrid classrooms, how to engage students in local government, and how to teach experimental political science.

We were extremely lucky to have Terri Givens, Professor of Political Science at McGill University, and the Founder of Brighter Professional Development, as the keynote speaker during luncheon.

Reflecting on her vast experience as faculty member and administrator, and drawing on her most recent book, Professor Givens spoke of the need to develop radical empathy in the classroom, by which she means the willingness to be vulnerable, the importance to open yourself to the experiences of others, the need to understand the origins of our own biases, and the imperative of taking action.

We finally want to thank everyone who made our conference a success it: the other members of the 2022 TLC at APSA Program Committee, the APSA staff members, and Michelle Allendoerfer in particular, and the APSA Political Science Education Section for their continuous support.

EMMANUEL BALOGUN, SKIDMORE COLLEGE

“Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Classroom”

Panelists in this track were commonly interested in explaining how issues of equity and inclusion show up structurally in our course design and instructional methods. In the two sessions, presenters discussed what it would be like to rethink our syllabi by embedding LGBTQ theory and praxis into our courses. Other presenters discussed issues of accessibility in research methods, and addressing Anti-Racism in political science syllabi.

The first panel, “Teaching LGBTQ Politics: Theory, Praxis, and Intersectionality” consisted of papers that are part of an edited volume with the same name. These papers considered the broader idea of teaching about LGBTQ politics as foundational in a political science curriculum. The panel led off with Edward Kammerer (Idaho State University) who argued that we need to interrogate the canon of political science and in particular the public law curriculum. Kammerer argues that rather than view LGBTQ politics as a subset of the field, which we teach about episodically, LGBTQ politics should be thought as part of the canon and embedded in the way one designs their course. Kammerer argued that LGBTQ politics is fundamental to the study of the American judicial system.

Following this theme, Haley Norris (Rutgers University/Bryn Mawr College) and their colleague Elena Gambino (Rutgers University) discussed how their course content and identities can present challenges when trying to establish authority in the classroom. They ask what does it mean to take up queerness as a metaphor that represents a divestment from all normative authority, especially when one appears in the classroom as a as a queer person? They argue that there is an “unresolved authority” in the classroom: moments when, as queer and as the professor, they must speak as experts, as

holders of knowledge, and as actors in the classroom who establish norms. Finally, Jyl Josephson (Rutgers University) discussed teaching LGBTQ politics the city of Newark, New Jersey and the demographic challenges associated with it.

In the second panel, Viviana Rivera-Burgos and Stephanie Golob (CUNY Baruch) analyzed political science syllabi in their department as a means to address an institutional call to make the curricula at the college more anti-racist. The panelists discussed their research methods, particularly how they coded the syllabi and assessed the content within the syllabi to identify the extent to which anti-racism is embedded in their department courses.

Janet Donovan (University of Colorado-Boulder) also discussed anti-racism and its presence in American political thought. Donovan's paper connected to a paper in the previous section in interrogating the canon literature in political science, and highlighted the extent to which the knowledge gaps in American political thought offer an opportunity to teach a praxis of anti-racism in political theory courses.

Tina Zappile (Stockton University) closed out the second panel by discussing the challenges of teaching research methods to blind students. Zappile highlighted how the inherent design of statistical software such as SPSS and STATA do not account for visually impaired students, while juxtaposing the requirement that political science departments have on statistical competency. Zappile highlighted their work with their university's accessibility department and provided video and audio of how a screen reader and other built in accessibility applications on computers also distort and limit the ability for blind students to develop statistical software competency. She offered some suggestions about how to navigate these issues as faculty, which then led to a broader discussion about what we as political science value in terms of student learning outcomes.

The projects in this track all engaged with meta-questions about the value systems in political science and particularly how these normative values create or constrain the conditions for equity and inclusion. The presentations and subsequent discussions allowed for a fruitful exchange between the panelists themselves and the audience. The audience was also deeply reflective about their practices in their own classrooms, and they were able to share experiences that the panelists also learned from.

KEVIN ANDERSON, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

"Simulations and Games"

The 2022 Teaching and Learning Conference at APSA's Annual Meeting in Montreal highlighted innovative presentations in the Simulations and Games track, in which scholars discussed new ways to engage and teach students across a variety of topics across the fields of political science. Over the course of two panels, presenters analyzed games as tools for teaching strategy in international relations, understanding political theory in the context of ethnic conflict, and understanding inequality and caregiving in the midst of a pandemic among the varieties of ways to implement games and simulations as part of thriving college classroom.

In our first panel, presenters discussed the use of ancient plays to understand modern conflicts; Spyridon Kotsovilis (University of Toronto Mississauga) detailed the collaboration of Political Science and Theater Departments (over the course of a full academic year) in putting together a reading of Euripides play, *The Trojan Women*. The play generated insights into both modern theories and effects of war as well as the process of conveying the insights of classical ideas to modern students. The impact of students not just reading the play but

engaging in detailed background study to convey the words of the play credibly, allowed students to analyze, discuss, and understand the implications of and the parallels to the contemporary conflict in Syria in a nuanced way that enhanced their broader understanding of war as a part of International Relations.

Chad Raymond (Salve Regina University) and Victor Asal (University at Albany-SUNY) demonstrated the power and effectiveness of conflict games through a stimulating game that incorporated ethnicity as a key factor. They discussed the specific impact of the game as players tried to determine when to betray each other in order to advance and win the game, as well as the student's recognition of the broader political theory that underlie the conflict within the game and its insights into morality and human nature.

Edmund Hally (Ferrum College) took a semester long approach to the use of games as an element of his classroom to measure the effectiveness of games as a teaching tool. This case study provided information on how, when, and why the instructor employed games as part of the class and highlighted where the games enhanced student knowledge and what the students thought of them as teaching tools. It also allowed Hally to adjust the use of games to fit specific topics and emphasis patterns that demonstrated key concepts in their readings that students could employ in situations to fully understand the implications of theories in practice.

In our second session, scholars discussed innovative ways to use games to highlight student skills and contemporary policy debates. Michael Ferguson (University of Colorado, Boulder) and Mohammad Rezwanul Haque Masud (University of Colorado, Boulder) explored using simulations to enhance leadership and speaking skills while Elizabeth Gerber (University of Michigan), Nathaniel Cradit (University of Michigan) and Caitlin Hayward (University of Michigan) sought to enhance student skills in a post-pandemic environment. Both presentations explained how simulations offered students opportunities to connect theory with possible consequences. In unique and stimulating presentations, they described the possibilities of simulations as not merely teaching core subject matter but as a way to inculcate essential critical thinking skills as students learn to understand and convey complex information.

Traci Levy (Adelphi University) utilized an extended role-playing game to demonstrate the policy choices surrounding caregiving and inequality. The game allowed students to assume the role of caregiver and understand the constraints they face in terms of salary, rules, and overall working conditions while also pointing to the fact that not all people who need this type of care have access to it. The choices made by the students as game players also reflect the broader set of policy constraints that inequality in our society places upon those who are tasked with regulating our system. It was an illuminating look at policy from both the caregiver perspective and the political leaders tasked with crafting official policy.

Our final presentation focused on the dynamics of a contemporary policy debate; Andrew Lewis Allen Goodman conducted simulations on the policy choices of the Russian state as it seeks to use energy as a lever in geopolitics. The discussion highlighted how participants used history and a baseline for understand Russian actions as well as the possible reactions by Russian neighbors and the West. The idea that certain moves by Russia might lead to multiple reactions by friends and foe complicated the policy recommendations of the participants and showed the ever complicated and evolving nature of energy as a commodity in contemporary politics.

The presentations were insightful and showed the relevance of simulations and games as vital aspects of the modern university class-

room. The use of these techniques allows students to learn the material and begin to apply these ideas in contemporary policy debates in ways that will allow them to anticipate the next iteration of a problem. This is very important to the dissemination of political science knowledge in the future.

KEVIN G. LORENTZ II, SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

TAIYI SUN, CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY

"Civic Engagement"

The panelists in the civic engagement track explored two interconnected themes: how to conceptualize "community" in civic engagement, and how the classroom's curricular environment impacts students' perceptions of American democracy and governance. Both themes carry discipline- and classroom-level significance in a post-pandemic political science. Michael J. Illuzzi (Lesley University) and Nafisa Tanjeem (Worcester State University) challenge the existing service-learning model of community and civic engagement, noting how courses employing service-learning often frame communities as underprivileged and needing to be worked for rather than with. Exploring who the "we" is within the university and community relationship in the framing of service learning is often overlooked, and students having different levels of privileges are not taken into account during analyses and civic engagement actions. Illuzzi and Tanjeem argue that a feminist and decolonial praxis can combat these neoliberal tendencies of the modern university, although incorporating such techniques into non-WGSS (women, gender, sexuality studies) programs is complex, contentious, and iterative. Their solution is to shift from an hours-based model of service learning to a project-based one while also reconceptualizing what is meant by the community vis-à-vis the university.

Keena Lipsitz (Queens College-CUNY) continues this theme by unpacking what is meant by communities of interest in the decennial redistricting process. Using the mapping program Representable, Lipsitz constructs a lesson that has students define the "core" of their community of interest and then seeing how current and proposed district lines impact their community's political power. Once students assess the proposed maps, Lipsitz asks students to submit testimony to the redistricting authority using Representable. She finds that students' testimony is far more thoughtful and informative relative to the general public's submissions, suggesting the utility of the embedded service-learning component in this larger engagement project. Unfortunately, the website Lipsitz uses for redistricting exercises requires

Adobe Flash Player and is no longer functional. It would be beneficial for scholars and programmers to recognize the benefits of such tools and develop new tools to benefit civic engagement learning.

Panelists Samuel Barrett Schmitt (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Emily Cottle Ommundsen (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), and Isaac Mehlhaff (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) also note the importance of integrating community engagement and service learning within a larger project-based curriculum. While undergraduate studies do not always lead to graduate studies, students will undoubtedly become community members. Therefore, placing students as agents of community and scholars within such a curriculum would be meaningful and beneficial. The authors do this through the integration of undergraduate civically engaged research (UCER) in a semester-long project that tasks students to work with community partners to analyze a community problem or need. Rather than asking students to prepare a project that tries to solve an issue, students analyze various potential solutions with input from community partners, centering students as agents within the community. A benefit of this approach is that instructors and students do not need to have preexisting community partnerships.

Such approaches of reconceptualizing the community and students engage with it also highlight the importance of curricular choices embodied in our course designs. Alexandra Reckendorf (Virginia Commonwealth University) posits that instructor agenda-setting and framing impact students' perceptions and assessments of American democracy. While both media and faculty might make framing decisions that could appear to be biased, investigating how faculty members set curricular agendas and frame curricular concepts could affect students' civic engagement would be necessary. Reckendorf observes that courses that are more optimistic and positive in their presentation likely impact students' interpretations differently than curricular frames that express pessimism and negativity. Students are asked to "grade" dimensions of American democracy (representation, elections, functional government, and civil rights) at the beginning and end of the course, analyzing subsequent rating changes. While preliminary, Reckendorf's findings suggest that the overall tone of the course does not impact students' overall assessments of American government. However, students whose assessments improved during the course of the semester also became more efficacious and satisfied with government, while the opposite happened for those whose assessment declined.

Stephen Chapman (Monmouth University) and Diana Brاندuse (Binghamton University, SUNY) also look at the impact of the classroom environment on student self-censorship—a much-needed study as existing work on self-censorship in education tends to focus



Attendees of the TLC Conference gather for a reception in Montreal, Quebec.

more on the educator or the researcher. Using Noelle-Neumann's Spiral of Silence theory, Chapman and Branduse hypothesize that students who perceive a mismatch between their opinions and those of their professor or peers will be more likely to self-censor in both discussions and written assignments. Summary statistics from a pilot survey suggest this is not the case; students are more attentive to how their views comport with their peers' rather than professors', with students having greater difficulty determining what their professors' views are. Additionally, students reported greater self-censoring during classroom discussions than in their written assignments. Analysis of the open-ended responses, though, indicates that while many students indicated little if any self-censorship, conservative students perceived that their views would be much harder to share, and therefore self-censored often.

Perceived differences in opinion complicate the political science classroom environment where discussion of controversies and politics is expected. Janet Lawler (Carnegie Mellon University) argues that we should teach intentionally through high-stakes content. Lawler argues that instructors should be confident in engaging with students who offer viewpoints that may be controversial or otherwise challenging in the learning environment but are not malicious or offensive. Such productive discomfort carries an embedded opportunity to learn, while unproductive discomfort does not because it only seeks to cause harm. Productive discomfort offers opportunities to transform the situation into learning, while active harm can be identified when unproductive discomfort occurs. Lawler also notes the importance of building community within the classroom itself to encourage such productive discomfort and minimize the unproductive variety; active learning strategies, adopting an ethic of care, and instructors being transparent about their goals in encouraging discussion can help to ensure productive learning. Lawler offers a five-step process that instructors can use (pause, decide, acknowledge, act, and document) to navigate both productive and unproductive discomfort, and encourages instructors to be "non-neutral" in their teaching.

Both track sessions provided panelists and audience members with robust conversations about how to approach community and course design in our civically engaged classrooms. Conversations were friendly and lively, geared towards discussing each paper's contributions while discussing ways to improve upon their foundations. Audience members were also highly engaged, asking questions and offering comments while reflecting on the panelists' comments.

NATASHA T. DUNCAN, PURDUE UNIVERSITY

"Teaching Research, Writing, and Information Literacy"

The panelists in this track examined approaches to and addressed questions on research, writing, and information literacy at two levels of praxis: the macro (curriculum) and the micro (pedagogy). Collectively, both panels bought into relief the challenges and opportunities for curricula and pedagogical innovations by departments and by individual instructors, respectively.

The first panel grappled with macro questions about how the discipline or departments should approach political science curricula. Each of the presentations focused on a different aspect of these broad matters.

Karthika Sasikumar (San Jose State University) argues for a new management of data produced by students in courses. The traditional privacy and intellectual property frameworks used to classify and

govern student work, Sasikumar contends, are ill-suited as they are deficient in capturing ownership and storage of student-generated online data and student-produced online work. Rather Sasikumar proposes an alternative perspective to dealing with educational data justice issues: "baking in" privacy and ownership in the design stage of online educational products, integrating faculty on data collection and storage oversight bodies, and adopting peer review principles. This shift to frameworks and practices in academia would benefit instructors and students who increasingly operate in an online teaching and learning environment where questions of privacy and property will persist.

Bulat Akhmetkarimov (Kazan Federal University), Renat Shaykhutdinov (Florida Atlantic University), and Ramin Ahmadoghlu (Emory University) examine regional and institutional differences in approaches to international relations education across three countries: Turkey, Russia, and the United States. Using typologies (Global Universalist, Localist, and Global Pluralist) that classify curricula based on their degree of internationalism, the presenters engage in a comparative analysis of syllabi at public and private institutions in the three countries under study. They build on the work of Acharya (2014) on Global International Relations and Kubálková's (1998) scholarship on universities as agents of disciplinary continuity or change. Akhmetkarimov, Shaykhutdinov, and Ahmadoghlu's work expands the field's understanding of the variation in international relations education globally. It also prompts us to contemplate the implications of the differences in perspectives, not only at the country level, but also at the institutional level (public vs. private), on the evolution of international relations as an area of study, and in shaping students' worldview.

In their presentation, Carrie Humphreys (University of Tennessee, Martin) and Adnan Rasool (University of Tennessee, Martin) address a growing and pervasive question: how to respond to the challenges of a changing labor market and the demographic shifts in student enrollment. Their approach is to rebrand and restructure the major. Drawing on their experience in a small political science department, the presenters demonstrate how they worked with colleagues to restructure their Global Affairs concentration. This effort entailed a scaffolded approach that emphasizes transferable soft skills, such as critical thinking, analysis, and written and verbal communication, and job-readiness mentorship. Among the many and varied lessons surrounding the mechanics of such a wholesale revision, the authors identify a critical point pertaining to the enrichment of the curricular experience for all students—that pedagogical reform cannot be fragmentary or atomized to individual faculty preferences—but need to be holistic. It is in this point of view they grounded their programmatic transformation and with which others should grapple and attempt.

The second panel provided track participants insights at the micro-level, offering innovations on teaching research, writing, and information literacy that were and could be applied to courses to large and small sections of courses.

The Covid-19 pandemic required adjustments of modalities for instruction and research. Courtney Page-Tan (Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University) presents her approach to training students in qualitative research methods under these unconventional circumstances. Accommodations for physical distancing restrictions was a significant aspect of this instructional intervention. Students conducted one-on-one interviews remotely via online platforms, but still needed to preserve the crucial components of interviewing techniques. The modifications to an online platform realized some challenges (building rapport with individuals, technical problems, and communication

skills) for the interview process, but also yielded unintended benefits (ease of interaction and convenience for the individual and the interviewer, and inclusion, especially of those with physical or economic challenges that would have otherwise prevented their in-person participation). These lessons, and thus Page-Tan's contributions, have implications for the future of qualitative research instruction and data collection methods, even outside of pandemic or physical distancing limitations.

The idea of not issuing a grade to students for their work in a course is difficult to grasp for some. After all, grading is a mainstream norm throughout institutions of higher education and K-12 schools. Stefan Kehlenbach (University of Toronto) asks political science instructors to disrupt this practice and consider "ungrading," a pedagogy that supplants the traditional classroom experience for one that is non-hierarchical and based on students' self-evaluations of their work. The instructor only provides constructive qualitative feedback on assignments. Applying this pedagogy to advanced political theory courses, Kehlenbach explains that, initially, students have a mix of emotions, anxiousness and excitement, toward this innovative class experience. By the end of the course, however, students perceive the experience as enriching.

The ubiquity and proliferation of misinformation and disinformation require attention in academia, especially political science courses where critical thinking is a central learning outcome and due to the impact of dis/misinformation on democracy, politics, and societal discord. Attending to this call, Heather Katz (Southwestern Oklahoma State University) discusses her approach to equipping students with the requisite literacy skills to recognize and analyze the news. Over two semesters in several 16 and 8 week introductory-level American Government seminars, Katz applied a news literacy intervention of peer-discussion, rubrics, and guidelines in a current events assignment. Katz's study provides a springboard for political science instructors to adopt news literacy practices in their courses.

Like their co-panelists, Margarita Safronova (University of

California, Santa Barbara) and Kristina Rohrer (University of California, Santa Barbara) demonstrated and invited discussion around course-based interventions instructors could adopt to enhance teaching research, writing, and information literacy. Their innovation was low-stakes assessments, namely peer-review activities, in large lecture courses, the size of which often presents challenges to provide students individualized feedback. Engaging with their peers as a reviewer engendered deeper learning among students, as shown by their comprehension of core course concepts and improved analytical writing. What Safronova and Rohrer find is that by the assignments having a small impact on students' grades, students took intellectual risk and reflected on their learning. Safronova and Rohrer's tool carries many possibilities for courses of all sizes, but the exciting contribution is its ability to scale. Instructors of introductory sections at large universities who seek to surmount the perennial challenge of student engagement should consider introducing low-stakes peer reviews in their courses.

CONCLUSION

The return to a fully in-person conference gave attendees at the 2022 TLC at APSA the opportunity to engage in lively conversations in eight workshops and two panels in each of the four tracks. We also had the chance to network with other colleagues interested in political science education. We are certain that we will see many collaborations that started during our breakfast, lunch, and the well-attended reception. We have only begun the conversation about how to reconnect with our students in this new normal created by the pandemic. As political science educators and researchers we value the space that TLC at APSA gives us. We thank APSA and those who attended this fifth TLC at APSA conference. We conclude by expressing our thanks to the TLC at APSA Program Committee for their hard work and dedication: Julio Carrión (co-chair), Allison Rank (co-chair), Kevin Anderson, Emmanuel Balogun, Natasha Duncan, Taiyi Sun, and Kevin Lorentz II (track moderator). ■



(Above) Left to right: Emmanuel Balogun, Skidmore College; Allison Rank, SUNY-Oswego; Natasha T. Duncan, Purdue University; Kevin G. Lorentz II, Saginaw Valley State University; Julio F. Carrión, University of Delaware; Kevin Anderson, Eastern Illinois University.