A Module Based Approach to Affordable Course Design

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PSC 211: World Politics Theories & Applications

Think Like a Social Scientist

Weeks 1-2
- Theories
- Hypothesis
- Evidence
- Conceptualizations

Causal Relationships & Case Selection

Weeks 3-6
- Dependent & Independent Variables
- Causality
- Comparisons

Weeks 7-9
- Levels of analysis
- Arguments & Assumptions
- Empirics & evidence

Comparing Theories

Weeks 10-14
- Goodness of fit
- Gaps & Limits

Application

Learning Outcomes
Students completing the course will be able to:
- Identify & explain theories in world politics.
- Apply theories and evaluate how well they explain events.

Affordable Course Goals:
Reduce Course Costs to $0 (outside of printing student assignments or materials).

Strategy:
Develop weekly modules focusing on cumulative skill progression based on four major thematic areas.

Topics became more relevant
A few examples from Fall '17.
- Maritime boundary dispute between Timor Leste & Australia
- Syrian refugee crisis
- Electoral intervention by foreign powers
- Tuvalu and climate refugees
- Flooding & response in Bangladesh
- Resources & conflict in the Central African Republic
- US/Mexico relations & NAFTA

Improved performance on some learning outcomes
Students demonstrated an increase in meeting or exceeding standards on the application and evaluation portion of class assessments. Students meeting or exceeding the standard on this outcome was approximately 8% higher than the average number demonstrated across the previous 7 years.

Example Course Materials & Assessment each week
- Foundation/reference reading
- Example from current event (news, policy piece, news clip, podcast)
- Scholarly or review article widely available through URI libraries
- Assessment based on integrative assignment: outline a Constitution for a new democracy. Identify & explain choices.