TAMAR MALLOY
TEACHING STATEMENT

Scholarship and democratic citizenship rely on many of the same skills: critical thinking, verbal and written expression, the ability to assess and make judgments about claims and sources, and the cultivation of carefully considered beliefs about our shared world. When students learn how to question the foundations of their political assumptions—when they start considering what justice means or how institutional arrangements affect our daily lives—they also become more engaged and thoughtful democratic participants. I find teaching political theory compelling in part because it is so well-suited to developing these skills, and my commitment is never stronger than when it also serves to make intellectual, political, and civic life more accessible and meaningful to students from all backgrounds. Towards that end, the foundation of my teaching philosophy and practice consists of a commitment to equity, accessibility, skill-building, scaffolding, and mentorship.

Students arrive in the classroom with various levels of preparation and support, often reflecting pre-existing inequities. I believe that the classroom is an important point of intervention, where these histories can become less determinative. Rather than assuming that my students have all of the knowledge and skills they need to succeed, I set aside time in the first week of class to talk about reading and study strategies that can help students orient themselves in the world of sometimes abstract and anachronistic theoretical texts. I then give them the option to submit an extra-credit "metacognitive plan," in which they assess their strengths, consider what has worked for them in the past, explore and assess new study strategies, and develop a plan for how they will organize and study during our semester together. We repeat these sorts of exercises throughout the semester, with in-class workshops on how to plan, research, write, and edit a paper; in-class exercises that model study strategies, like compare-contrast charts and visual diagrams; guided free-writing exercises to help students brainstorm topics and theses; and scaffolded assignments that show students how to progress through different stages of a research project and use the set of skills and knowledge developed in one assignment to inform and improve the next. These skill-building practices are designed to be effective for students who are well-practiced as well as those who find themselves a bit lost at college, and help level the playing field by making expectations and skills more transparent, and by communicating to students that I am interested in supported both their substantive knowledge and their academic skills. This approach demonstrably improves students' comprehension and written work and helps them move forward as holistically stronger students. Eliciting student feedback—which I do through a mid-semester evaluation as well as mandatory university end-of-term evaluations—also helps me meet the needs of students in each specific group. It has been especially useful for accommodating different learning styles, as when I have used games of charades to help kinesthetic learners understand Rousseau's views on the relationship between language and civilization, or staged mock elections to show experiential learners how different voting systems can affect outcomes.

Attempts to create a more equitable classroom require an accessible learning environment. I take this to mean both that students aren't restricted from joining in and that students from different backgrounds can find ways to connect with the material. I find that avoiding restriction is just as much about absence as presence. For instance, I avoid activities that require students who don't actively volunteer to stand or move furniture, that rely on images that are low contrast or rely on colors that are most likely to be illegible to color-blind students, or that require personal disclosures about identity or background. In so doing, I aim to avoid moments where students are held apart from their classmates or have to self-identify in ways that might be isolating or vulnerable. I also aim to create moments that provide gentle entry points into the class community and help students feel connected to one another and to our time together. On the first day of class I ask students to introduce themselves instead of calling roll, so that I don't mispronounce students' names or call them by a name they'd rather not make public, and then ask them to identify a strength or favorite song, both of which reliably create unexpected moments of connection and help students see that they might have things in common with peers who they don't yet know. Across the semester, I remind students that there are no dumb or bad questions as long as they're asked in good faith, and that our classroom is a space where everyone is welcome and expected to make good faith mistakes as part of the learning process. Relatedly, I grade participation based purely on frequency (including written and online options for disabled, ill, shy, and/or anxious students) so students know they will not be penalized for taking risks, sharing their perspectives, holding different ideological positions, or asking questions they may not yet be able to fully articulate. And across all of my courses, I work to help students find ways to connect with course material. In my current upper-level courses this includes giving every student the chance to pick a research topic based on their own interests, giving students the option to write some assignments in ways that include creative forms and languages other than English, having students brainstorm and then vote on topics for some class meetings based

on their interests and recurring themes in in-class conversations, and working to diversify readings. In my introductory Survey of Western Political Thought, which focuses on the Western canon, I introduce historical and biographical context that has helped students connect the readings to contemporary debates. For instance, we talk about whether and how Locke's role in legitimatizing slavery as the author of the Constitution of the Carolinas should shape our understanding of his defenses of freedom, how we might reconcile Rousseau's defense of equality with his misogyny, and whether Mill's role in the East India Company and his discussion of "backwards states" contradicts his views on cultivating genius in unexpected places. I also find it useful to make space for and follow along with student questions. In leaving room for unexpected, student-driven conversations—"If Mill's goal was to cultivate genius, did he think stupid people should have rights?" "Is Rousseau's *amour-propre* like worrying about how many Instagram likes we have?"—students open lines of inquiry that can lead to rich philosophical contemplations in class and reaffirm that their experiences are important starting points for examination and theoretical thinking.

While I have found all of these approaches to be effective in the classroom, their impact is never clearer to me than in the context of long-term mentoring relationships. I have made a point of building relationships with students who might not think to seek them out, or who might seek them out because we share an identity or interest. While at the University of Pittsburgh, I supervised half a dozen undergraduate research assistants, the majority of whom were women of color, queer women, and/or first-generation students who I was able to recruit simply by asking, encouraging, and offering opportunities they had not known about or hadn't thought of as "for them." At the University of Colorado, I have developed relationships with students and help them find research opportunities by making it explicitly clear that I am happy to help them navigate unfamiliar areas and pursue their interests even if it isn't strictly related to course material. Many of these relationships have become meaningful and lasting: a woman of color who was my RA at Pitt later asked me to serve as a member of her MA committee; a young queer student who sought me out because I am the only openly queer member of my department and who recently filled me in on his first year at law school; a first-generation student who told me that "up until your course I felt I was simply studying and there was a barrier between what I studied and my own life and passions," shortly after defending her *Summa* thesis in front of her very proud family. These opportunities to get to know students, to support them long-term, and to help make the world a bit more equitable and accessible is often the most motivating and moving part of my job, and it is something I am eager to continue.

Across all of these contexts, my commitment to supporting and learning from students from a diverse range of backgrounds is deeply held. It is also well-established, dating back to my first job, at 16, as a peer educator in New York City going into schools, community centers, and prisons to council young people on their rights to access health care. After college, my work with Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, the National Consumer Law Center, and as a volunteer tutor to middle school students put me in contact with a broad range of communities, and the same was true once I entered academia. I have taught or counselled students who are as young as 12 and those well into their 70s, with different levels of facility with English, with physical and learning disabilities, and with mental health struggles. I have taught veterans, documented and undocumented immigrants, housed and unhoused students, members of the LGBTQ community, international students, first generation students, people who are or have been incarcerated, and students who are working and/or caregiving while in school. In all of these cases, I have been humbled, moved, and consistently reminded that teaching is most effective when we learn from one another and find points of connection and enrichment across different life experiences.

I am honored to have been recognized with the University of North Carolina Department of Political Science's John Patrick Hagan Award for Outstanding Teaching and the University of Colorado Boulder Department of Political Science's Graduate Faculty Mentor Award. I am even more honored to have played a role in supporting students from many different backgrounds as they imagine and pursue meaningful futures for themselves. I hope to continue teaching introductory and advanced courses on a broad range of topics in contemporary theory, including theories of justice, identity, equality, and democracy; identity and the law; feminist political thought; critical race theory; queer theory; American political thought; and modern and contemporary political theory. And beyond any specific course, I am most dedicated to continuing to look for new and expanded ways to build accessible and inviting classrooms, and help students from all walks of life realize their personal, academic, and political goals.