

Teaching Evaluations for Travis Sharp

Course: Grand Strategy Spring 2016 ([WWS 315 / POL 393](#))

Instructors: Aaron Friedberg and John Ikenberry

Level: Undergraduate

***** Overall teaching rating: 4.7/5.0 *****

Summary of Teaching Activities

In spring 2016, Travis served as lead preceptor for Grand Strategy, an undergraduate course co-taught by Aaron Friedberg and John Ikenberry. The course covered the theory and practice of grand strategy from ancient Greece to the 21st century. It included readings from Thucydides, Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Clausewitz, *The Federalist Papers*, Mao Zedong, George Kennan, Paul Kennedy, and John Lewis Gaddis, among others.

Travis led three precept sections. He delivered mini-lectures, guided small-group discussions, held office hours, ran review sessions, and graded exams and papers. He also served as lead administrator for the course, managing the schedule, readings, announcements, and website.

Drawing on his professional background, Travis co-designed and ran a grand strategy simulation for the course, “The U.S.-Chinese-Russian Triangle, 2017-2027.” Nearly 70 students participated. The simulation challenged students to navigate political, military, and economic dilemmas in the context of shifting power, inadequate time, incomplete information, and civil-military tension.

Unedited Text of All Student Comments

Please comment on the quality of the precepts. How did they contribute to your learning in the course? To what extent did the preceptor raise challenging questions, help clarify course material, and encourage broad student participation? Was the preceptor responsive to students’ questions, opinions, and criticism?

- “A classmate remarked to me ‘I wish Travis taught the class’ and I heartily agree. One of the most skilled teachers I’ve had at Princeton, with a tremendous knowledge of the material and military strategy in general, and good at communicating clearly what was important and getting people to engage in conversation. I would give him higher than a 5 if I could.”
- “Travis was truly incredible. His control of the subject matter was impressive, and he provided a great military perspective to historical issues. In this way, he contributed something unique to the course that Ikenberry and Friedberg could not. He was really great at leading our discussions, but also challenged us to think critically.”

- “Travis is easily the best preceptor I have ever had and most likely will ever had. Every precept discussion was well-balanced and well-run. I got something out of every precept discussion, which certainly doesn't happen in most classes. He also did a nice job of guiding our reading and of giving tips for exams and papers. His advice to me outside of class regarding future career options and helpful professors was also invaluable. I genuinely enjoyed going to precepts, and that was all due to Travis. He is a huge part of why I loved this class. I'm rating him a 5, but I'd go higher if I could.”
- “Travis made the class for me. It was by far the most ‘intense’ precept I've ever been in – people were incredibly knowledgeable on the topic and always ready with historical examples and theories. I believe Travis was part of why. He gave us great guidance on the course through suggested IDs and readings to focus on, the guidance on the final paper was more than I could have ever hoped for. Besides the support he gave us in managing the class, he was the best preceptor I have ever had because of how he pushed the conversation, the way in which he got us to contribute, and his response to each of our comments. He proved he was invested in our success in the class, but also our general point of view on the topic and the reading. He is also a genius, and this was the first time I've ever found myself having a conversation outside of class about how great the preceptor is.”
- “Travis was an amazing preceptor. As a military man, he was able to approach problems of strategy analytically and comprehensively. In addition, he engaged the entire precept in a way that kept each class exciting.”
- “Travis was incredible. Best preceptor I've had at Princeton. Funny and approachable but also knew the material really well.”
- “Travis is the best preceptor I've had at Princeton. Not only did he lead good discussions that dissected a lot of the most important bits of a week's material, but he also gave invaluable guidance for doing the next week's readings. Not sure how I would have gotten through this class without precepts.”
- “This man is easily one of the most knowledgeable and helpful preceptors out there. Plus, he's a really cool dude who cares about his students. He sat down with me in Cafe Viv before the midterm exam to clarify the readings I had questions about. In another instance, we sat down to talk over the thesis for my paper. Both of these experiences have given me profound respect for Travis – as a scholar and as a person. He cares and will go out of his way to make your learning better. Plus, in precept, he is a total boss and keeps discussion moving.”
- “The precepts were pretty stimulating. However, I think Travis should dramatize what the course is about a little less (e.g. stating that if we could not write a good essay, we would cause losses of job or deaths during our professional life was a bit too much).”

- “Travis was very engaged in the class and made it enjoyable to attend, asking interesting questions and driving discussion forwards with a set of questions emailed out the day before to guide the discussion.”
- “Travis is a great preceptor. He's really willing to teach you and make you understand things. He also encourages questions in class and is willing to brainstorm term paper topics with you. He is also very clear when reviewing the readings for the week and also adds onto it with his own knowledge and experience. It was very enjoyable.”
- “Travis is amazing. He was so helpful in streamlining our review process in thinking about what to look for and take away from the readings. He is also a very engaging, patient preceptor, and very supportive of the students.”
- “Travis has been extremely helpful.”
- “Travis always made his comments on our work very clear.”
- “Best part of the course by far. Travis dedicated an enormous amount of time, thought, and effort to the students.”
- “GET TRAVIS AS YOUR PRECEPTOR. He is amazing and is an incredible person to get to know. He makes it clear what is important, and helps immensely in editing Deans Date assignments.”
- “Travis was amazing. Facilitated good conversations, led just enough that we talked about useful topics but not too much that we didn't get a chance to offer input. Laid out a plan of each precept, and IDs to remember. So so helpful. Really helped me get a handle of what we were supposed to take away from each week's lectures/readings. Thank you!!”
- “Best precepts I have ever attended.”