

*Evaluations are organized by instructor, so feedback on Teaching Assistants is aggregated. Therefore, I have only included the comments from these evaluations that identify me by name (or in the case of PLSC 261000) by gender. The evaluations here are the most recent ones available to me. The evaluations for the 2014-15 Preceptorship were not recorded due to a labelling error. I do not have access to the Chicago State University student evaluations, but have included a statement from the department chair who reviewed them in the section, "External Evaluations".*

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## **Student Course Evaluations**

### ***Qualitative Evaluations***

#### **PLSC 29000: Intro to International Relations Autumn 2010, Charles Lipson**

John Thomas III was a fabulous TA. He was really helpful, provided a great perspective into the class and IR theory and really engaged discussions about IR Theory.

John Thomas III was one of the best TA's I've had at this school. He is clearly passionate and extremely knowledgeable about the subject while at the same time presenting it in a manner that is easier for us to understand. He really encouraged outside thought, and his sections were always the best prepared for exams! I would recommend anyone who has the chance to be in his section to definitely take it.

#### **PLSC 26100: To Hell With The Enlightenment Winter 2010, Bernard Silberman**

He graded the assignments quickly and fairly.

#### **PLSC 29000: Intro to International Relations, Autumn 2012, Charles Lipson**

John Thomas is a great TA. He's very knowledgeable and friendly.

John was EXTREMELY helpful, in the discussion as well as outside.

#### **PLSC 29000: Intro to International Relations, Autumn 2013, Charles Lipson**

John gave decent overviews of the material being covered and explained what we would be seeing on the tests. I don't really think he facilitated any discussion, but that was ok.

John Thomas was a great discussion leader, helped explain main points and really focused on helping our section do well on the exams.

*The first external evaluation is my reflection on the analysis by two professional teaching consultants from Chicago Center of Teaching. The second is a letter from my immediate supervisor during my tenure at Chicago State University who observed my classes on several occasions.*

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### **External Evaluations**

#### **Individual Teaching Consultation for Public Policy 29800: BA Seminar**

**Date: November 29, 2014**

**Consultants: James Nemiroff and Borja Sotomayor**

#### *Background*

I participated in an [Individual Teaching Consultation](#) by representatives from [the Chicago Center for Teaching](#) (CCT) to receive feedback on my teaching practices as part of the CCT [College Teaching Certificate Program](#). Two teaching consultants from the CCT observed and recorded 80 minutes of my 180-minute seminar, Public Policy 29800. The course met weekly and was designed to guide undergraduate students in formulating and executing their year-long senior thesis projects. Afterward, the consultants met with me and provided detailed feedback.

#### *Observations*

The consultants informed me that one of the strengths of my teaching was my ability to conduct the class in an approachable and engaging manner and making the comments and discussion relevant and accessible to the wide variety of majors that were present. However, consultants were concerned with the room's bowl-shaped structure and how it did not foster intimacy for working groups because the fixed seating made it impossible for students to sit closely together.

#### *Suggestions*

The consultants offered suggestions for teaching development, such as developing lesson plans for the day and creating specific prompts and tasks before the discussion to help prepare the students to contribute to class discussion. They also recommended using the "Think, Pair, Share" technique to help facilitate discussion.

Because each of the seminars were 180 minutes, they suggested that I needed to share the outline of that day's class at the beginning of each session and use the last five minutes of the session to reiterate and summarize the objectives and goals. I was also advised to frequently change the pace of activities and incorporate visuals and different activities.

They also recommended that I regroup the students by similar topics for the discussion groups as opposed to having students informally create groups based on the persons seated in their

proximity. They also suggested that I could use part of the 180-minute seminar to meet one-on-one with students, similar to the format of holding office hours.

Lastly, the teaching consultants noted that even though the syllabus was somewhat fixed, having been constructed by the Public Policy Program, that I should still attempt to make it my own by adding the techniques to facilitate discussion and reviewing the readings to see if they were applicable to the students I was teaching and reviewing the language used.

### *Adaptations*

After the teaching consultation, I began creating outlines for each class and structured the time to allow for a summary at the end. I tried the in-class office hours, which were helpful, given that some students were athletes and had scheduling difficulties, which prevented them from attending my regular office hours.

### *Reflection*

Overall, this experience was valuable to my teaching development because I was able watch video footage of my lecture style as well as have a different pair of eyes alert me to the classroom dynamics that I was not able to see. I learned that my engaging lecture style is helpful and that to maintain the attention of students in a long lecture class using a clear and visible structure is helpful. I also learned that I speak quickly and need to monitor my rhythm of speech constantly. Some of the practices that I continue to use in my teaching today include posting the session's schedule at the beginning of the slide presentation or writing it on the board; periodically reviewing syllabi for language and relevancy, and incorporating the discussion facilitation techniques into the lecture sessions.

**OFFICE OF CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION**

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11 May 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

John Thomas has requested I submit a letter of recommendation concerning his teaching at Chicago State University. This is my pleasure. I have known Mr. Thomas for approximately a decade.

John taught a Special Topics course for us in American and African-American Cultural Literacy. The course was targeted for students in our Honda Campus All-Star Challenge program. This program for historically and predominantly African-American colleges and universities involves a quiz bowl-type competition centered on African-American civilization. We initiated the course while John was our Assistant Coach. It helps our students prepare and compete more effectively. They also learn a lot of neglected information about culture, politics, and society, among other topics.

John is an outstanding instructor. He puts 100% plus energy into his work. This showed in his consistent preparation of handouts, study guides, and visual presentations for students. As a teacher, he empowered students to present material as well, and I witnessed a number of excellent student presentations and group presentations about the material of the course. His student evaluations were replete with comments about the course's rigor, his high expectations of students, and his high level of instructor involvement, including outside of class.

John Thomas' work in this course and as an adjunct instructor was exemplary. I commend his teaching to you without qualification. Should you have any questions, or require further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Bernard Rowan (PhD, Political Science, '93)  
Associate Provost  
Professor of Political Science  
Coordinator, CSU HCASC