SYMPOSIUM

Research and Undergraduate Teaching: A False Divide?

Introduction

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The American Political Science Association (APSA) connects scholars from varying fields, perspectives, backgrounds, and educational institutions. A microcosm of this diversity can be found on the APSA Council of which I currently have the privilege of being a member. At a recent council meeting, discussion turned to APSA's Teaching and Learning Conference. The conference serves as a venue in which many political scientists define their professional communities, yet, it regularly operates at a financial loss for APSA. Thus the question is what APSA can/should do to continue the conference without suffering a financial loss. The conversation proceeded with a variety of intriguing suggestions, although a solution was not reached. Through much of the discussion, an unstated reality clearly loomed in people's minds. Eventually one of the council members—who is an acclaimed teacher and scholar—stated what I imagine was on everyone's mind: there is a two-tiered system such that most professors at major research universities have scant incentive to invest in undergraduate teaching, and professors at many colleges have reason to excel in the classroom. The disparity manifests itself in a number of trends including the growth of nontenure track faculty at research universities and the anecdotal, but evident, fact that undergraduate course releases constitute an invaluable commodity that regularly becomes part of negotiations for those at research universities.

THE MERGING OF RESEARCH AND UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

How to financially reconstitute the Teaching and Learning Conference and how to address the increasing separation between tenure track and nontenure track faculty are perplexing problems, for sure. Related to these issues is an underlying challenge in the social sciences: the common view that teaching and research constitute exclusive activities. The former involves the dissemination of knowledge and the latter the production of knowledge. While it is not difficult to identify a number of professors who excel in both domains, most ostensibly continue to view teaching and research as separate enterprises. To me, this is a misconstrued perspective.

I say this for two reasons. First, a liberal arts education should do more than provide information/knowledge to students; rather, it is incumbent on instructors to ensure that students acquire the tools needed to address and resolve problems in a variety of domains. For social scientists, this means educating students so that they know how to apply the basic scientific method of asking questions, generating theories and hypotheses, collecting data, and analyzing results.[1] One obvious way to do this is by instituting adequate training in research and/or having students take part in research. Second, I often recall a comment that the speaker (a physical scientist) made at my PhD commencement: he stated that, without compare, the most exhilarating moments in his professional career occur when he arrives at a new insight and, for some time, realizes he may be the only person to possess the knowledge. I believe this sentiment is half true. The other half, which the speaker failed to mention, is that one enjoys equal, if not greater, satisfaction watching a student enjoy that experience—an experience that undoubtedly motivates the student to learn more and recognize the possibilities of practicing social science (as a professor or in another professional domain).

What is the implication? Research and teaching can be viewed as a single enterprise. This can proceed in a variety of ways; examples include:

- ensuring students learn the essential skills needed to conduct different types of research in a way that not only prepares them to proceed with their own research but also motivates them to want to proceed;
- incorporating the class into one's own research; and/or
- working with students as they undertake complete or partial social science efforts at discovery.

The specifics on each of these possible avenues depends on the school, field, method, and professor involved. Thus it is essential to discuss these approaches from a variety of perspectives: this symposium aims to do exactly that.

PERSPECTIVES ON MERGING RESEARCH AND UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

The goal for each of the symposium's contributions is not to embrace and/or argue for all of the aforementioned

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teaching/research tactics, but rather, within a given field and setting, to explain how teaching and research can complement one another with the ultimate possibility of them being treated as a joint endeavor. As will become clear, the authors offer distinct views—for example, some emphasize the need for a methods course prerequisite that prepares and stimulates undergraduates and also can generate methodological self-awareness by the instructor, whereas others suggest that such course requirements are not necessary for the merging of research and undergraduate teaching. Of course, there is no correct approach/answer; what works depends on the situation.

In the symposium's first essay Elman, Kapiszewski, and Kirilova highlight how enrolling in a methods course facilitates meaningful contributions to research projects. The authors offer a detailed proposal of what such a course would look like when it comes to qualitative methods—an important blueprint in itself given the paucity of such courses. Moreover, Elman and colleagues emphasize that such classes should involve "learning by doing"; however, the "doing" involves crafted research situations rather than authentic research with a professor. While the authors do not rule out undergraduates jumping right into research, they emphasize, to a greater extent than some of the other contributions, the role of prior method courses. The reality of what can work is likely topic-, student-, and professor-specific, and none of the contributors oppose methods prerequisites per se. Such courses also can benefit the instructors in their own research as it creates a bevy of well-prepared students with the skills and motivation to move into assisting and completing research—thus teaching and research are not distinct but rather best seen in a sequence.

In her article, Luxon offers a slightly different approach, but also in line with the idea that students benefit most by learning key skills prior to and in preparation for conducting research. This learning comes, however, not through methods courses, but rather through a style of instruction where professors "teach what they don't know." Such teaching flies in the face of ostensible common practice where teachers stick with their expertise and so uncritically replicate bodies of knowledge and the classroom hierarchies that organize them. Instead, Luxon challenges instructors to move into areas where the answers are not so clear. Such pedagogical experimentation not only motivates student inquiry but also, critically, stimulates researchers themselves to "think outside of the box." Instead of repeating canonical discourse and research, professors should venture into new areas. In so doing, they discover underinvestigated areas, thereby opening up novel avenues of inquiry that generate new research agendas and, ideally, keep research closer to politics and political debates.

The next two articles take a different track by emphasizing how undergraduates can immediately join into research efforts. In their contribution, Herrick, Mathias, and Nielson argue for the mutual benefits of professors teaching their students how to do research and doing it with them (as full coauthors). They explain how such an approach coheres with research on learning in psychology and neuroscience: it makes learning tangible and concrete, it reinforces concepts via deliberate practice, and it motivates through engaged learning and self-direction. Collaborations with undergraduates also generate superior social science by incorporating "outside-the-box" connections (similar to Luxon's argument) and taking advantage of specialization and skill complementarity. The authors offer a host of examples of where faculty and undergraduates collaborated in the design, implementation, analysis, and writing of randomized (largely field) experiments. Their examples provide clear evidence that research and undergraduate teaching can be merged, at least with regard to the types of work they describe, with enormous benefits to all involved.

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Druckman offers an analogous argument that focuses on two ways to bring research and undergraduate teaching together within the field of political behavior. First, he offers examples of how classes can be incorporated into a project as a team; for example, each student in the course conducts a single project (e.g., content analyzing media coverage of an issue) that is then aggregated with the work of other students to arrive at a larger-scale piece of research. This works best with relatively smaller classes; thus, another approach that is more practical with larger classes is for students to work independently in conducting research where they are guided step-by-step. The examples suggest merging research and teaching stimulates engagement, advances research, and, in some cases, leads to collaborative relationships. Druckman also emphasizes precautions when one attempts to merge research and undergraduate teaching: students should be treated as partners, the goals should be explicit and transparent, and coauthorship opportunities need to be considered.

Druckman's second approach of guiding students to undertake complete or partial research aligns with the themes in Huerta's and Berger's articles. Specifically, in his paper, Huerta discusses the challenges and possibilities of working with undergraduates at regional public universities. He points out a number of unique hurdles including the effort of teaching students underprepared for the challenges of college, large teaching loads, and the demands to teach large core courses. On the flip side, Huerta points out the increasing pressure for faculty to publish at regional public universities and thus merging teaching and research is of particular relevance. He then describes his experience teaching a senior seminar (that requires a method course prerequisite) where students complete a research project; he explains how this

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also benefits him by generating new ideas for his own research from intense work and discussions with the students. Huerta also discusses the scholarship of teaching and learning that melds research and undergraduate teaching by making the research about student learning and the factors that affect it. Indeed, Huerta has become a central voice in researching teaching approaches through his experiences and subsequent publications.

will be immediately embraced and resolve tensions between research and teaching. One obvious hurdle is time—teaching is time-consuming and launching research projects typically demands even more. The time, however, does not compare with the outcomes. On an institutional level, the ideal would be that universities and colleges embrace the merging of teaching and research by altering how success is measured (e.g., introducing metrics that assess effective teaching based

Teaching can help research, and research can help teaching—when this lesson is embraced, the potential for new approaches to teaching and the completion of new research projects vastly expand with enormous benefits for all involved.

Berger's article offers a perspective on how one can structure courses to promote citizen engagement, and by so doing, generate novel research. Berger not only challenges the view that teaching and research are separate endeavors, but he also shows how political science (teaching and research), in general, and civic education can go hand-in-hand. He offers a series of compelling examples where instructors bring their classes into the community (e.g., to work on campaigns, to participate in voter registration drives, to interact with inmates). The experiences stimulate student interest and lead to civic participation. Moreover, Berger explains how the courses benefit the instructors' own research. To cite just one of several examples he offers, Berger's own research on civic engagement has been shaped by the courses he has taught, leading him to isolate exactly what "civic engagement" means (e.g., it is often a nebulous umbrella term) and how it can be implemented. Berger's article illustrates how teaching can create engagement which indirectly brings students into the research process.

Taken together, the six articles reveal how one can improve research and undergraduate teaching as well as help, at least partially, vitiate the distinctions with which I began this introduction: that is, the divides common in many universities and colleges, and within APSA. I am not so naïve to believe this philosophy partially on what students produce in the class and after the class) and providing resources (e.g., in many instances I employ PhD students to assist with the class research that benefits the PhD students in their own development). In sum, teaching can help research, and research can help teaching—when this lesson is embraced, the potential for new approaches to teaching and the completion of new research projects vastly expand with enormous benefits for all involved.

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I thank the reviewers for their enthusiasm which transformed some rough thoughts into a symposium on the relationship between research and undergraduate teaching. I also thank the authors for their wonderful and insightful essays. Finally, while I imagine dedicating a symposium is unusual, I nonetheless would like to dedicate the symposium to the memory of my sister, Kathy Berggren, who was my first teacher and whose impact as a teacher at Cornell University cannot be understated. ■

NOTE

1. I recognize that some political scientists do not share this perspective, but my focus here is on social science as a positive and not normative endeavor.

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