Steve L. Monroe's Teaching Statement
September 2026

I teach comparative politics, international relations, Middle Eastern politics, and research methods. My courses draw from my research agenda, whether on the Middle East, development or trade politics. I have taught discussion-based seminars and large lecture courses. My courses range from advanced undergraduate seminars to foundational courses that support second- and third-year students' major requirements. I am also an active honours thesis supervisor. I have supervised fifteen honours theses, three of which won departmental awards (Table 1).

Research informs what and how I teach, and what I teach influences what I research. For example, three years ago I taught a new course: Small States in Peace and War. Small states are a focus of my new book project. This course was an excellent opportunity to deepen my knowledge of small states and to learn from my students, most of whom are from a small state – Singapore. This class inspired the Small States in Peace and War Research Forum, a website that invites students to submit op-eds about the small states they studied in class.

My extensive collaboration with undergraduate research assistants (RAs) and coauthors embodies this symbiosis of research and teaching. I have collaborated with over a dozen undergraduate RAs. I coauthored with three former RAs on two research articles, including one that was published in *Perspectives on Politics*. My student coauthor for that project won the National University of Singapore (NUS)'s Outstanding Undergraduate Research prize, and is currently a research fellow at Harvard University.

My supervision of and coauthorship with undergraduate RAs support their intellectual and professional development. I teach RAs not only how to conduct research, but also real-world skills like time management, effective writing and best practices for presenting. I have presented with students at academic conferences in Chicago and Singapore. As a student, I found this type of supervision invaluable: it gave me real insight into the research process, the requirements and rigor of preparing materials for publication, and the chance to get my name out there. I am glad to give students similar opportunities. These students have gone on to become management consultants, research fellows, and civil servants.

I. Teaching Approach and Reflection

Two principles underpin my teaching philosophy: inclusion and iteration. My teaching helps students become more critical thinkers by giving them access, agency, and space for dialogue with political science theory, evidence, and instruction.

My first teaching principle is to foster learning through inclusion. Students are more likely to grasp and critically assess course content when they can relate to it and teach it to others. Access to course material and agency over course instruction are pillars of inclusive learning.

The syllabus is the bedrock of an inclusive classroom. I assign a range of voices, methods and media to render the material accessible to as broad an audience as possible. This means incorporating scholarship from underrepresented voices in academia but also placing parts of novels, films, and non-academic texts in conversation with peer-reviewed scholarship. Lectures are also an opportunity to broaden class readings and the curriculum. For example, the textbook for International Political Economy primarily relies on case studies from the

United States. I helped globalize the course material by highlighting examples from China, Europe and India, and with assignments requiring students to describe and defend the perspectives of non-US-based actors.

Inclusive learning also gives students agency over their learning. I foster co-learning in my pedagogy by pairing lectures with group activities like student-led presentations, debates and town-hall-style discussions where students represent different stakeholders. These activities help students share their perspectives on the day's lecture. They also lower barriers to participation by structuring student engagement within a group setting. Combined, these strategies promote a more inclusive learning environment.

Outside of the classroom, I require every student in my seminar courses to attend office hours at least once in the first half of the semester. These sessions are an opportunity for me to get to know my students, to see how the course is going, and to course-correct when needed. For example, in my International Development course, I learned during office hours that quite a few students were struggling with the course's quantitative readings. Based on this feedback, and to make future readings more accessible, I organized group-based "methods breaks" in seminar where we went over how to interpret an assigned reading's regression table: a hands-on and inclusive approach to helping students understand quantitative research.

Iteration is my second teaching principle. Updating course pedagogy and readings based on student feedback, new developments in the field and the world helps students grasp the course and its relevance. As a result, a good syllabus is an evolving syllabus; one that takes into account day-to-day and global-level changes during the semester, and improves between semesters. I regularly update syllabi with new articles and books that are making waves in political science. Not only does this bring students up to date with the latest research on topics discussed in class, but juxtaposing new with older work helps students adjudicate between competing arguments.

Feedback is another engine of iteration. Successful teaching is a dialogue between teacher and student. I obtain student feedback through mid-semester course evaluations and office hours. I also invite senior colleagues to observe one of my lectures. Peer observations can help catch pedagogical blind spots that are hard to find in course evaluations. Debriefs over coffee afterwards provide a trove of teaching advice.

For example, when I first started teaching, I noticed that seminar discussions often felt like ping-pong between me and the students, but seldom conversations *among* students. After brainstorming with a peer observer, I tried a new approach: I now take two breaths before interjecting into a lull in seminar discussion. Since then, I have found that those extra seconds give quieter students more time to respond to their classmates' comments, enabling more dynamic and interactive classroom discussions. Students are more likely to remember and learn from these types of discussions, thus bolstering their understanding of the course material. Indeed, one colleague described my teaching as "highly effective and intentional," and noted that I am a "strong discussion leader."

These teaching principles of inclusion and iteration were shaped by the global and institutional transitions that marked my career as an assistant professor. I began my teaching career amid the Covid-19 pandemic. One year later, NUS announced that it would close Yale-NUS College (YNC), the liberal arts college where I instructed, in three years. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has marked the past three years of teaching. All these events were unexpected

to students and faculty. They introduced new policies and uncertainties. And though these events challenged my teaching, they also reaffirmed the importance of inclusion and iteration in my teaching philosophy.

Teaching amid these uncertainties taught me that iteration and inclusion can help mitigate the costs and amplify the opportunities of these changes. For example, travel restrictions during Covid-19 required a handful of students in Methods in the Social Sciences to Zoom into class for the entire semester. Proactively reaching out to the remote students early in the semester helped establish opportunities for remote participation and guardrails against technology glitches. These protocols included pairing remote students with an in-person classmate, and designing in-class activities that incorporated remote students through breakout rooms.

Teaching in the age of AI has also required substantial iteration. My university encourages students and faculty to use AI responsibly. Under these university guidelines, I've lectured on how I apply AI for writing and research, but have also invited students to share their tips on using AI with the class. Based on experience and student feedback, I've found that lecturing about AI use is far less effective than consulting students on the opportunities and pitfalls of AI through in-class exercises and problem sets. For example, I invite students to share their code and AI prompts during class when we learn how to plot World Bank data in my International Development course. These in-class exercises not only familiarize students with quantitative analysis, they give students opportunities to learn – and teach one another – how to employ AI effectively and ethically, skills they will need in the workforce.

Across these changes, my teaching philosophy has remained anchored in inclusion and iteration. Inclusion ensures that students can see themselves as participants in their learning rather than consumers of course material. Iteration ensures that my courses remain responsive to student needs, institutional change, and global developments. Together, these principles have helped me build classrooms where students are challenged and invited to take ownership of their learning.

II. Evidence of Teaching Success

My teaching success validates these teaching principles. Table 2 presents average teaching evaluations for my courses at YNC and my current institution NUS. I list the courses in reverse chronological order. My average teaching evaluation scores per course – on a 1 to 5 scale of teaching effectiveness – (Column 6) are benchmarked against my department's (Column 7) and institution's (YNC or NUS; Column 8) average teaching evaluation score. Column 5 presents student evaluation response rates for each course. The denominator is the total number of registered students in a course. Readers may note a declining student enrollment from AY2021/2022 to AY2024/2025. This reflects the end of newly admitted student to YNC after NUS's announcement of the liberal arts college's closure in August 2021.

Table 2 illustrates three trends. First, I am a good teacher. My mean teaching evaluation scores are generally greater than my department's and institution's teaching evaluation scores. Across six academic years, two institutions, and fifteen courses, my average teaching effectiveness rating is 4.7 out of 5, higher than my department's (4.5), and institution's (4.5) averages during that period.

Second, I continue to be a good teacher in new environments. Prior to transitioning to NUS, I had only taught in a liberal arts setting. My courses at YNC were mostly capped at 18 students and were largely discussion-based. At NUS, I had to lead lecture-based courses for the first time. My annual student load has grown more than fivefold, from 17 in my final year at YNC to 89 students during my first year at NUS. Nevertheless, my teaching evaluations for two out of the three courses I taught at NUS exceeded the department's and the faculty of arts and social sciences' averages. For the course with the highest average teaching evaluation (4.8), nine out of thirteen students nominated me for a teaching award. Finally, though International Political Economy with 58 students was by far the largest course I have ever taught, I effectively adjusted to teaching a lecture course, receiving a 4.5 out of 5 average evaluation score.

Third, my evaluation scores for the same course have an upward trajectory, underlining how iteration can bolster better teaching. For Methods in the Social Sciences, a required course, my average evaluations increased from 4.48 in AY2020/2021 to 4.62 the following academic year. My evaluations for International Development grew from 4.69 the first time I led the course (AY2021/2022) to 4.9 three academic years later, the fourth time I taught the course. I take student and peer feedback seriously and incorporate it to improve my pedagogy.

Students' qualitative evaluations reaffirm my teaching approach. The following quotes from student evaluations highlight my teaching's emphasis on inclusion:

- "**The class environment struck a rare balance between academic rigor and open conversation**. The policy-oriented focus of the course made our learning feel immediately relevant, not just theoretical. I also valued how the Professor set clear expectations early on, especially regarding academic integrity, AI usage, and inclusive classroom norms. Overall, this course sharpened my analytical and writing skills, deepened my understanding of development, and left a lasting impact on how I view global inequality (AY2024/25)."
- "Professor Monroe's **emphasis on class participation, inclusive discussion, and ethical engagement with difficult topics created an intellectually stimulating and respectful environment** (AY2024/25)."
- "Professor Monroe's course was very well-structured and encouraged a lot of discussion between students. **There was a good balance between the time spent lecturing and the time spent discussing or working with other students.** Overall, this course was very enjoyable and exposed me to a new area of international relations studies that has inspired me to learn more about this field (AY2023/24)."
- "Class dynamic was affable and welcoming, in large part due to Prof Monroe's genuine interests in the topics we covered. **Classmates were frequently engaged and enjoyed discourses raised in class** (AY2022/23)."

These quotes reflect my emphasis on iteration:

- "**Prof.'s Office Hours have been, by far, the best ones I have ever had during my entire college experience**. Prof. Monroe has been extremely helpful in explaining the material, advising on assignments, and even mentally supporting us. The class was engaging and insightful. Prof. has not only been very knowledgeable but also very compassionate about our mental state and workload (AY2020/21)."

- [Prof. Monroe] "also always **encourages students to meet him for office hours**. I myself exploited that. Prof Monroe also **continually implements feedback rather than collecting feedback and then implementing it in the next semester which none of the current students will benefit**. For example, I sort of gave a feedback that during the presentation Prof. Monroe would interject with clarifying questions which would eat into the presentation time and disrupt the flow. In the final presentation, he provided a 2 minute buffer and left his questions till the end. I appreciated that (AY2025/26)."
- "**Professor Monroe took our mid-semester feedback seriously** and implemented effective adjustments to the course structure. Professor Monroe was extremely understanding and accommodating to students on Zoom and made the most of the hybrid model – truly paving the way for hybrid education. **Professor Monroe should be taken as an example for the rest of the faculty and how to teach effectively and with empathy** (AY2021/22)."

Peer observations confirm these patterns as well.

Associate Professor Chris Howell, who observed my teaching at YNC, writes: "Steve is a highly effective and intentional instructor of this course. He thinks carefully about each activity and how best to introduce the material and engage students….**there did not appear to be a trade-off between the effective presentation of material and an interactive classroom** with high levels of student participation (AY2021/2022)."

Associate Professor Ben Schupmann (Political Science), who observed an International Political Economy lecture at NUS, notes:

Given the size of the lecture and it being a lecture class, opportunities for sustained active discussion were structurally limited. Nevertheless, **students were attentive throughout the lecture**: many had the lecture slides open on their laptops (they were also projected onto screens in the front of the class) and were taking notes as the lecture progressed. Prof. Monroe frequently paused to pose questions to the class (as noted earlier, sometimes binary questions and sometimes more open-ended ones). This helped keep students focused and provided a break from continuous note-taking. **These moments also allowed students to engage with the substance of the lecture and helped maintain attention in a large lecture environment**.

In sum, I am prepared to teach courses in Comparative Politics, International Relations and Middle Eastern Politics. The teaching principles and practices that I have developed over the past six years will continue to guide my pedagogy, delivering close student–faculty collaboration, inclusive learning, and iterative instruction.

Table 1: Honours Thesis Supervision

Year	Institution	Student	Title	Award
2025/2026	NUS	Adwaith Sankar	From Energy Interdependence to Comprehensive Partnership: Explaining UAE - Japan Relations	
	YNC	Tham Mei Shuen* (co-supervised)	Between the Bear & the Dragon: Central Asia at Crossroads	
2024/2025	YNC	Ellisha Khairy* (co-supervised)	Blue Helmets Off: Unmasking Sexual Misconduct in UN Peacekeeping	Sheila N Hayre Prize for Outstanding Capstone
	YNC	Shim Yew Brian	Small States, Big Impact: How Small States' Defence Diplomacy Promotes Greater Stability	
	YNC	Regine Sun	Miles Away from Accountability? The Democratic Paradox of Capital City Relocation	
	YNC	Teera Al Tal	Jordanian Herstory: Gender, Citizenship, and 'Fifth Column' Rhetoric	
2022/2023	YNC	Michael Sagna	The Impact of Smartphone Ownership on Support for Government in Nigeria	Global Affairs Best Capstone Award
	YNC	Andrea Yeong Xiu Hui	Egypt's E-Revolutions: Social Media and Protest-led Regime Change in Egypt	
	YNC	Nii Lantey Malik Aryee-Boi	The CFA Franc: A Vestige of French Colonialism in FrancAfrique	
	YNC	Nur Aina Binte Sapari	Faith in Liberal Democracy: Political Islam & The Protection of Civil Liberties	
2021/2022	YNC	Giulia De Benedictis	Beijing's Multinationals at the Helm of the South China Sea	Global Affairs Best Capstone Award
	YNC	Wisha Jamal	A Tale of Two Militaries: Origins of Divergent Military Rule in Pakistan and Myanmar	
	YNC	Yasmine Messaikeh	Leveraging Private Capital to Make Beirut More Equitable	
2020/2021	YNC	Elesin Teo	Lessons from Switzerland: Assessing the Effectiveness of Citizenship Test in Fostering Integration in Singapore	
	YNC	Hie Guan Jie	Do Labour Regulations Undermine Domestic Competitiveness? A Study of the English Premier League	

Table 2: Course History and Evaluations

Year	Sem.	Institution	Course Title	Response Rate	Monroe Average Effectiveness (1-5)	Dept. Average Effectiveness (1-5)	Inst. Average Effectiveness (1-5)
2025/2026	2	NUS	International Political Economy (PS3238)	(44/58)	4.5	4.3	4.3
	2	NUS	Comparative Study of Development (PS3262)	(13/18)	4.3	4.3	4.3
	1	NUS	Emerging Markets and Economic Governance (PS4226)	(11/13)	4.8	4.4	4.3
2024/2025	2	Yale-NUS	Small States in Peace and War (YSS4274)	(1/1)	5	4.54	4.68
	2	Yale-NUS	International Development (YSS3255)	(15/16)	4.9	4.54	4.68
2023/2024	2	Yale-NUS	Small States in Peace and War (YSS4274)	(8/10)	4.38	4.77	4.62
	2	Yale-NUS	International Development (YSS3255)	(19/21)	4.88	4.77	4.62
2022/2023	2	Yale-NUS	Small States in Peace and War (YSS4274)	(8/8)	4.91	4.48	4.5
	2	Yale-NUS	Southwest Asia and North Africa: Politics and Society (YSS2236)	(9/9)	4.86	4.48	4.5
	1	Yale-NUS	International Development (YSS3255)	(19/20)	4.5	4.53	4.51
2021/2022	2	Yale-NUS	Methods in the Social Sciences (YSS3231)	(15/16)	4.62	4.65	4.53
	1	Yale-NUS	International Development (YSS3255)	(11/17)	4.69	4.49	4.58
	1	Yale-NUS	Southwest Asia and North Africa: Politics and Society (YSS2236)	(5/10)	4.74	4.49	4.58
2020/2021	2	Yale-NUS	Methods in the Social Sciences (YSS3231)	(24/29)	4.48	4.49	4.43
	2	Yale-NUS	Southwest Asia and North Africa: Politics and Society (YSS2236)	(10/12)	4.87	4.49	4.43