



Political Science Department

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From: Michele M. Betsill, Professor and Chair *Michele M. Betsill*

Re: Teaching observation of Dr. Ben Schrader

On 5 October 2016 I had the opportunity to observe Dr. Ben Schrader's POLS 421 Contemporary Political Theory class in the Political Science Department at Colorado State University. I hired Dr. Schrader to teach this during the Fall 2016 semester to help fill a gap left by an unexpected faculty departure. This upper-division elective course for Political Science typically enrolls 40 students. Prior to my observation, I reviewed Dr. Schrader's course syllabus and found it to be well-organized and appropriate for the course. We do not have a set syllabus for POLS 421 so Dr. Schrader had the freedom to craft the course as he saw fit. The readings and topics covered demonstrated a good command of the subject matter and a level of work appropriate for undergraduate students at Colorado State University.

I was impressed with what I observed when I attended class. Dr. Schrader has an easy presentation style and seemed to have a good rapport with the class. The topic of the day was drone strikes and the conduct of war viewed through the lens of concepts such as "truth weapons," the "dispositif," and the "militarized gaze" drawing on theorists such as Michael Shapiro and Michel Foucault. Dr. Schrader did an excellent job of helping students understand these abstract concepts and making them concrete through the use of specific examples and multi-media clips. Dr. Schrader stopped regularly to check in with the students, answer questions, and engage in debates about whether and how drones should be used as part of a military strategy. The majority of students appeared to be actively engaged in the material and many of them directly contributed to the discussion.

Dr. Schrader and I met briefly after class to discuss my observations and teaching more generally. I was surprised to learn that he was nervous by my presence; that did not show up in what I observed. We discussed the perennial problem of trying to engage a broader swath of students in class discussions and especially encouraging more women to share their ideas. Dr. Schrader was genuinely interested in exploring ways to continue to improve his teaching and was receptive to advice.

Based on my observation and his performance thus far, I have hired Dr. Schrader to teaching a section of POLS 232 International Relations in the spring.