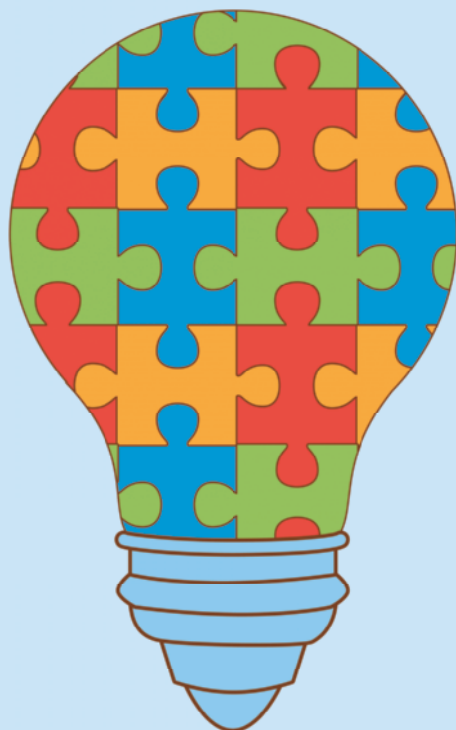




POLITICAL PEDAGOGIES



# Active Learning in Political Science for a Post-Pandemic World From Triage to Transformation

*Edited by*  
Jeffrey S. Lantis

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# Political Pedagogies

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The purpose of the series is to create a new space for conversations between scholars of political pedagogy, and between such scholars and those looking for guidance on their teaching, and become the main recognizable authority/series/conversational space in this field. The proliferation of journals, conferences, and workshops devoted to teaching attest to the accelerating interest in the pedagogy of Political Science and International Relations over the past two decades. While research scholarship remains the dominant criterion for hiring and promotion at top tier institutions, almost all academics in these disciplines spend most of their energy teaching, and more than two-thirds do so at institutions where effective teaching is the primary factor in career success (Ishiyama et al 2010). Even those at research-intensive positions benefit from more effective classroom environments, and institutions across the world are building centers devoted to improving teaching and learning. The challenges of teaching span sub-disciplines and connect disparate scholars in a common conversation. Indeed, teaching may be the only focus that academics in these disciplines truly share. Currently, most writing about teaching politics is published in journals, and is therefore dispersed and restricted in length. This series will provide a much needed platform for longer, more engaged contributions on Political Pedagogies, as well as serve to bring teaching and research in conversation with each other.

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Jeffrey S. Lantis  
Editor

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## PREFACE

The novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has imperiled the lives of billions of people and seriously disrupted institutions and social structures around the world. It has also affected every college and university, as well as students, staff, and faculty members. But after a year of canceled live classes and suspended activities, the development of effective vaccines and stronger public health education and mitigation programs have allowed colleges to begin to reopen. With strong science and good fortune, many are optimistic that the world will gradually return to ‘normal.’

But what will the new normal in political science education look like? Will our approaches to teaching and learning in colleges and universities ever again be the same? Could they actually be even stronger as a result of our experiences and thoughtful deliberations about how best to meet learning goals? This volume in the Palgrave Macmillan Political Pedagogies series is one of the first of its kind to grapple with critical questions about possible legacies of the pandemic for political science education. It devotes special attention to how our pedagogy in political science has evolved from ‘triage’ to transformation over the course of the pandemic. Chapters in this collection are authored by a diverse group of experts on online instruction, award-winning teacher-scholars, experienced administrators, and directors of teaching and learning centers with political science backgrounds. They draw directly from the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) in developing unique approaches to political science education, and these chapters also make valuable contributions

to the disciplinary discourse. Many chapters conclude with discussions of expectations that the new normal in political science pedagogy may be more clearly anchored in educational objectives, flexible, and centering and empowering for students.

This represents a carefully curated and organized collaboration. The chapters examine five common themes: (1) Pre-pandemic institutional orientations and commitments; teaching and learning objectives in our institutions and political science classes; (2) Detailed description of how the pandemic changed teaching and learning at our institutions and within our classes, with particular attention to blended or hybrid teaching and learning approaches grounded in the SOTL. Authors also discuss technical issues, including their use of learning management systems and online/hybrid teaching tools; (3) Assessment and surveys of our experiences, pre- and post-pandemic (including lessons and tips for successful adaptation to pandemic pedagogy). These include reflections like: What are the implications for the discipline by integrating more SoTL into how we design and run our classrooms? What are the benefits of having more students who may be more motivated to learn about pressing issues like public health and environmental policies? And critically, will the innovations and adaptations that we employed help produce ‘better’ or ‘stronger’ political science student graduates, or have we simply been getting by? (4) Reflections on inequalities laid bare during the pandemic and our efforts to assist students to overcome these challenges. This section frames political science instruction as a very important lens to examine the promises and pitfalls of pandemic pedagogy in light of inequalities and raises questions about assessment of student engagement and participation change when students are remote; (5) Projections for the ‘new normal’ in political science and higher education in the post-pandemic world: What will we learn from pandemic pedagogy, and will these changes be permanent or fleeting?

Another distinction of this project is that it is one of the first books in the discipline to comprehensively examine how the Covid-19 pandemic may have changed *what we teach* and *how we teach it*. To be optimistic, one might argue that our discipline was especially well-positioned to help make sense of the complex dynamics associated with the pandemic, and Covid-19 effects and responses became the centerpiece of many discussions. For example, some of our classes focused on global public health, international organizations, foreign policies, and disease vectors. But harsh realities also provided fertile ground to reexamine the utility of

theoretical constructs in international relations, like whether neorealism or neoliberal institutionalism best accounts for state actions in the face of a global pandemic. Chapters in this book examine a range of adjustments that instructors made in their curriculums in this spirit over the past year. At the transnational level, the study of issues such as immigration policy, climate change, populism, and regional wars took on new levels of significance. Courses on war and disaster studies were directly impacted by the pandemic. This crisis also had direct implications for national, state, and local politics. As we turned to our leaders for guidance, though, many sensed the limits of governance. Instructors were able to raise and discuss critical questions in their classes about the role of science in political decisions, public trust, leadership qualities, and state and local government capacities.

This book also features valuable conversations about how Covid-19 has changed how we teach and even *who we are* as instructors. Responding to this crisis has produced a flurry of innovations, and chapters in this book explore themes ranging from reevaluating what constitutes student participation during the pandemic, to experiments with ‘ungrading’ and streamlined assignment and evaluation structures. Authors examine the benefits and drawbacks of changing student expectations based on online and hybrid class experiences and powerful lessons learned. Finally, on a personal level, many instructors have had to adjust their expectations during a global crisis and perhaps have become more empathetic about student experiences. Our chapters demonstrate the importance of reflective assessment on the possibility of transformations in political science education to more student-centered models, and they encourage teacher-scholars to view the task of reevaluation as manageable and fruitful.

Wooster, USA

Jeffrey S. Lantis



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my colleagues and students for assistance in production of this volume. This project was very much inspired by a crisis. In the face of the devastating news that the novel coronavirus would change the ways that we worked and lived, I joined most of my colleagues in launching into ‘triage’ mode: I spoke with many of my fellow political science instructors about how to quickly change my instructional approaches and, along the way, I began to reflect with them on what this might mean for political science education. I credit a conversation with Dr. Yasemin Akbaba, a professor of political science at Gettysburg College, as the real spark for this project: we reflected on how the Covid-19 pandemic created challenges but also opportunities for personal and professional development. By April 2020, I had launched an early iteration of this project, identifying the outbreak as a tragic but powerful teaching moment, and I began creating frameworks for comparisons of institutional development and class teaching before and during the disaster. I invited a diverse group of experienced and trusted colleagues at different institutions to conduct surveys on the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning in political science during the 2020 spring and summer terms. They then converted these into conference papers for a linked set of panels that we organized for presentation at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association (virtual) in April 2021. Those panels produced thoughtful, earnest, and engaging conversations about teaching and learning, and we advanced these for publication.

I am grateful for the support of all the contributors to this volume. David Hornsby and Jamie Frueh have been encouraging of this project from the outset, and they helped guide me through the proposal and manuscript submission process. The editorial team at Palgrave Macmillan were terrific to work with, applying their professional experience to help us develop a more impactful book and streamlining the production process. My friends and colleagues on the editorial team at *International Studies Perspectives* have also been very supportive of this project from its inception, including Jim Scott, Guadalupe Corraera-Cabrero, Danielle Lupton, Brandy Jolliff-Scott, and Yasemin Akbaba. In addition, I would like to thank my colleagues Matthew Krain and Kent Kille for their collaboration on active teaching and learning work for two decades, along with student research assistants, Emily Hasecke and Lilia Eisenstein for their work on editing and assembling this manuscript.

Finally, I want to credit the thousands of students that I have worked with in the classroom. This book is about how we can *all* become better teachers and learners, and you inspire me every day to strive for that ideal.

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# Introduction: Active Learning for a Post-Pandemic World

*Jeffrey S. Lantis*

**Abstract** This book critically examines challenges and successes in political science instruction and higher education during the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. It devotes special attention to how our pedagogy in political science has evolved successfully over time during the pandemic from ‘triage’ to transformation, as well as examines challenges that remain before us. This project began in the spring of 2020 when a group of political scientists recognized the pandemic was becoming a powerful teaching moment and created frameworks for comparisons of institutional development and class teaching before and during the disaster. Chapters in this collection are authored by a diverse set of experts on online instruction, award-winning teacher-scholars, experienced administrators, and directors of teaching and learning centers with political science backgrounds. Essays address common themes, including descriptions of our institutional

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missions, political science classes, and the state of higher education before the pandemic; new dilemmas and opportunities presented by the integration of blended and hybrid learning in classes; critical examinations of ways the pandemic has highlighted powerful inequalities among institutions, faculty, staff, and especially students; and finally, assessments of our pandemic transformations and projections for future. Chapters conclude with expectations that the ‘new normal’ in political science pedagogy may be more clearly anchored in educational objectives, flexible, resonant, and centering and empowering for students.

**Keywords** Pandemic pedagogy · Political science · Blended and online learning · Inequalities in higher education · Assessment · Student-centered learning

The novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic created serious disruptions in higher education. It has had a tremendous impact on our lives and work as teacher-scholars in political science. Indeed, many have wondered whether our approaches to education will ever again be quite the same? The political scientists who contribute to this special collection address this question from diverse perspectives—as instructors, administrators, and learning center directors who have tried to seize the “teaching moment” created by this major disruption and reflect on transformations in our teaching and learning about politics.

Our book features ten original chapters providing different perspectives on the challenges of pandemic pedagogy. This initiative was launched in the first months of the Covid-19 shutdown in the United States, and the collection has been carefully curated and developed in collaboration throughout the pandemic. Chapters reflect on, and conduct assessments and surveys of the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning in 2020, as well as longer-term transformations. The authors corresponded about their ideas and then presented their experiences through papers at two linked panels during the annual meeting of the International Studies Association (virtual) in April 2021. These panels produced thoughtful and earnest conversations about teaching and learning during the pandemic, on topics ranging from what really constitutes student “participation” during the pandemic, to experiments with “ungrading” and streamlined