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Dr Nishizaki is a new faculty member in Political Science who has made an impressive teaching debut. The extraordinarily positive responses he has elicited from his students testify to a teaching method that is demanding, but encouraging and rewarding. His modules are well-designed, favouring depth over superficial exposure. And his care and dedication to teaching are evident, as demonstrated both by student comments and the extensive preparation involved in curriculum design and delivery.

Dr Nishizaki is clearly a scholar with a deep and broad knowledge of the countries and issues he works on. To be an outstanding teacher, however, expertise is not enough: it must be translated into qualities that can capture student attention, engage them in active exploration on their own account, and inspire them with something of the passion felt by their teacher. On these counts, Dr Nishizaki has excelled. Students frequently note his knowledge and expertise, but they are even more appreciative of the way he has related it to them. They point to his ability to simplify concepts and bring them to life, to his enthusiasm and to his commitment to taking *them* seriously. As one noted, 'He is fair to all students and gives everyone a chance to speak and listens to all opinions.' Perhaps more than anything, Dr Nishizaki's evident willingness to show his concern for students and their learning has made him able to engage and motivate them. All components of Dr Nishizaki's student feedback scores are exceptionally high, but the items that speak to his willingness to go the extra yard – in terms of providing useful feedback and being approachable for consultation – are particularly distinguished.

Dr Nishizaki's effectiveness as a teacher is underpinned by his ability to understand his students. His teaching philosophy statement, refreshingly free of jargon, sets out apparently simple precepts to teach by: be well prepared, take the grading task very seriously, take the time to give students the tools and background knowledge they need, encourage their critical questions, be accessible – and be fun. These are things that most teachers aim at, but their ability to deliver on these goals depends on understanding their students well enough to know what will work and what will not. What makes feedback useful to the student, for example, is not simply its quantity or absolute quality, but its calibration to them personally. Similarly, the injunction to be 'fun' or interesting will remain empty unless a lecturer has a good sense of what appeals to his or her students. Dr Nishizaki's empathetic understanding of his students is made obvious in the repeated student endorsement of his lively humour, his ability to interest them, and his readiness to take extra time to advise or offer extra explanations, in and outside the classroom.

Nearly all teachers use examples that, they hope, will be accessible to their students in order to illustrate abstract theoretical concepts. Dr Nishizaki's teaching and module design take this use of illustrative examples several steps further. His brand of political science is one that values a commitment to exploring 'cases' in terms of their internal significance, rather than taking abstract theory and simply applying it. This concrete grounding in the lived experiences and realities of the political systems under study is likely to be an important reason why students report that their interest in the subject matter has been stimulated, and they are inspired to look out of the classroom with fresh eyes. This does not mean that Dr Nishizaki just serves up doses of uncooked, a theoretical empirical material. The assigned readings in Dr Nishizaki's modules make it clear that core analytic debates and issues are central, but his approach is one that shows the dynamic development of theory in relation to its empirical referents, as the field has evolved both over time and from one empirical setting to another. Students report emerging from his classes with both a more developed set of conceptual tools and analytic capacity, but also a deeper knowledge, interest and appreciation for the region in which they live.