

Samuel Baltz

All of my historical course reviews

FALL 2017

CMPLXSYS/POLSCI 391, 1st section

1. This is one of the best GSIs I've had. I can't stress that enough. He made material that was so dense and flew over my head much more accessible. I felt comfortable asking questions in discussion, and felt that attending discussion actually was a good use of my time. Basically, this GSI made very hard, intimidating material easier to understand and apply, through teaching in an engaging and accessible style.

Ways to improve:

- hand the homework back faster or make it a point to hand it back regularly
- maybe go over some of the harder homework problems in class after we turn it in so everyone's on the same page

Things done well:

- really engaging discussion section, wasn't boring
- really liked the mix of independent work, group work, and lecture style in discussion. good variety of teaching styles too depending on how you learn.

2. Samuel offered valuable insight into the subjects we learned in lecture, especially when it came to clarification of the details. The discussion and lecture combination format worked unusually well in this class; I think professor Page and Samuel complement each other well. While we get a lot (a lot a lot) of big picture ideas from lecture, in discussion we are able to ask all the questions we need of the finer details and together that grants a complete picture of the subject matter. I think the quality of the teaching in the discussion was very good. The format of the discussion was not my favorite; historically I have preferred classes where discussions had a lot more students talking and thinking together. For this class, however, the discussion had a bigger role for teaching more on the subjects learned in lecture rather than as reflection for the students, so I understand why it was formatted the way it was. Samuel's knowledge of the material was more than sufficient and his understanding of the math background was helpful and apparent.

3. This course had barely any relation to politics, government, elections or anything that relates to most political science classes - I think this should be more clear in the description.

4. Well aligned with lecture. OH were student-friendly. The one change I would make would be spending less discussion time on logistics issues. Also, we started the discussion sections thinking we would spend 20 minutes on each day of lecture from that week, but by the end that structure completely changed (and probably for the better). Group activities, comparing models

notebooks, and more stimulation rather than review would have been really awesome. I thought Samuel did a phenomenal job for his first time, especially with speaking clearly and answering questions to the best of his ability.

5. Samuel was an incredible GSI. He made sure to bring in background information to discussion to enhance our understanding of lectures. He also presented them in an organized fashion and in multiple ways for different learning styles. Furthermore, he kept the environment of the discussion as a collaborative and creative one. He clearly cared about not just getting good grades but more about us understanding the concepts and how to apply them to our lives, future disciplines, and the greater world.

6. This class was the hardest one I've taken at Michigan. Appreciated GSI's willingness to answer questions and do tedious examples in office hours. Samuel was always super enthusiastic about the material and models, which served as its own encouragement in addition to his perceived care for students. Wanted more resources uploaded on the discussion Canvas page, especially when GSI brought up links and slides. Unclear how well GSI communicated and met with prof, made me less confident as a student. I know the GSI union has strong rules about hours worked, but I wish hw could be returned more efficiently and quickly with comments when I got things fundamentally wrong. In future, maybe send a Canvas announcement with the agenda of models to be covered/announcements written out before section meeting in order to maximize our limited time and give stronger sense of organization. Enjoyed use of chalkboard visuals in section for explanations. Sometimes his added content confused me further rather than easing my fears of Scott Page's lectures. Overall, I am so grateful for Samuel in this class in particular! Best wishes for his future classes and those lucky students!

7. The class overall was great, I wish the logistics and grade requirements were described more clearly. Also homework collection and distribution could be run smoother.

COMPLXSYS/POLSCI 391, 2nd section

1. The group activities in the class are not as helpful as the lecture format. I would suggest short (2 min) group activities interspersed in a lecture format where you go through and mirror the model notebook format (i.e. assumptions, core model, extensions).
2. It was very interesting material, but the exams were very hard and a lot of information to cover. I liked the more structured discussion sections that focused on a specific lecture/concept that was difficult.
3. I was very intimidated by this class going in, but I've never had such a caring and considerate GSI who was so willing to help and explain things in different ways outside of class time. His energy about the course material made me excited about the course material as well. While I sometimes felt lost in lecture, I felt reassured in section and never completely out of my element thanks to Samuel. The most helpful part of section was always when we worked through problems slowly on the board or when Samuel introduced us to different applications not presented in lecture. Thank you for all the time you put in this semester!
4. Good
5. The quality of instruction was great! I think there were some challenges with the structure of the lectures as they relate to an ability to give quality discussion but I think that Samuel overcame those challenges well. I really enjoyed the discussions where we applied the models and discussed what models we used and why they were good for certain problems. I also think those classes were the best for preparing for the final. I wish that our classes had been less focused on the math (maybe leave that for office hours?). I could be biased because I am pretty comfortable with math but I do think it would have been nice to take the time we used on the mathematical bases of the models and used it to talk through applications/critiques of the model
6. Samuel did an awesome job. He taught at a reasonable pace and had a clear understanding of topics that were covered quickly in class. I appreciated how approachable he was. I never felt like I couldn't ask a question in discussion which was really important for a class like this in which topics are covered really quickly in lecture.
7. Excellent! Other than classwork (which he picked out the important or difficult ones and went through them slower or more clearly with group work or additional explanation), there are some extension of theories outside the class and useful resources (software). They added to the class and it was great to be in his discussion

CMPLXSYS/POLSCI 391, 3rd section

1. Samuel has been an awesome GSI and he always provides students new angles to think more in-depth about the models. It will be more helpful if he can prepare slides or handouts for students to review the class materials. Thank you Samuel for the awesome semester!

2. I feel that the discussions for this class needed to be longer. Also, it took a few weeks before Samuel got rolling smoothly. Just as the students have to be present in order to avoid getting behind, so does the gsi.

3. Sam is responsive.

4. Samuel was fantastic as a first time instructor. The material was difficult and with the 50 minutes we had each week, he did a great job of preparing us for as much as possible. A few pieces of advice:

- don't waste time with writing an outline on the board or writing out definitions, just use slides or say it
- especially with this class, send out a survey before section to see what we need help on. sometimes we'd review the simplest parts of the models and that wasn't particularly helpful
- figure out a way to review EVERY model, I know time was difficult, but it would've been helpful to somehow have 10-15 minutes on every model

Overall though you were extremely helpful and made my 391 experience more enjoyable and I definitely learned more from you.

5. The discussion section really helped me to understand materials presented in the lecture. What I think was great is that the section helped my understanding by presenting other ways of understand the material that wasn't a exact copy and paste of a lecture. I think increasing the discussion time to two hours a week would be more helpful because there were a lot of materials presented in the lecture. I think the discussion session would have been even better if it had devoted a little bit of time every time to make assumptions of the model very clear.

6. Samuel was GREAT. For a first time GSI, he seemed like he taught this course for decades. He grasped the concepts really well, and was extremely aware and sensitive of students' confusion and struggles with the course material. Samuel is undoubtedly extremely intelligent in this subject area, and without knowing the lecture material before us, he was able to turn around the next day and clarify the material really well. Oftentimes, everything seemed to make sense during the lecture and then I would leave class thinking "wait what." Samuel helped to fill in the cracks and smooth out the material, if that makes sense. I felt that Professor Page's lectures often lacked the signposting I needed to make sense of the model(s) and other material presented. Samuel was able to clarify my understanding through his explanations and course activities. I certainly would've enjoyed more time doing Samuel-led problems during discussion but his lecture-style discussion sections were often necessary (there just wasn't enough time!). I owe a decent amount of my grade to Samuel and his hard work and his willingness to explain things

and meet with us when needed--would **HIGHLY** recommend that anyone in this course take it with Samuel; I couldn't imagine understanding the content like I do without him. 10/10

7. Baltz is great, especially in comparison to what I heard about Jason (sorry). He tried very hard to give good background knowledge about course topics, since lectures could be somewhat overwhelming and it helped to understand basic principles underlying applications. One thing to recommend - if he talked a bit less about time management during section, he'd save five minutes and actually manage time better. Writing out the outline of what section would be about on the board is useful. Talking about it - less so. Overall - great GSI, very knowledgeable, loves Canada, provides lots of interesting references to other polisci works and scholars, very helpful and available in office hours.

8. It seems as though discussion needed to be longer to get a real understanding of the material. Samuel was an excellent aide to the course he was very knowledgeable in his teaching. I did not care for the midterm study session. I would rather get the explanation from the person who teaches as opposed to the students. I left early because it was too difficult to follow.