



Chuck Szypszak Wins Freshman Teaching Award

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Chuck Szypszak recently was notified by Chancellor Folt that he is the recipient of the [2016 J. Carlyle Sitterson Freshman Teaching Award](#). This is a prestigious award and it is unprecedented, I think, for one of our faculty members to be recognized for teaching undergraduates. In fact, this is the first time the award has been given to anyone whose faculty home was not in the College of Arts and Sciences. And it is the first time the award was given to someone from an academic unit or school that does not have its own undergraduate program. The selection process was rigorous—members of the committee reviewed course materials, teaching evaluations, and they interviewed students and others about the finalists. Frayda Bluestein and I met with two members of the committee and they asked thoughtful questions about Chuck's teaching.

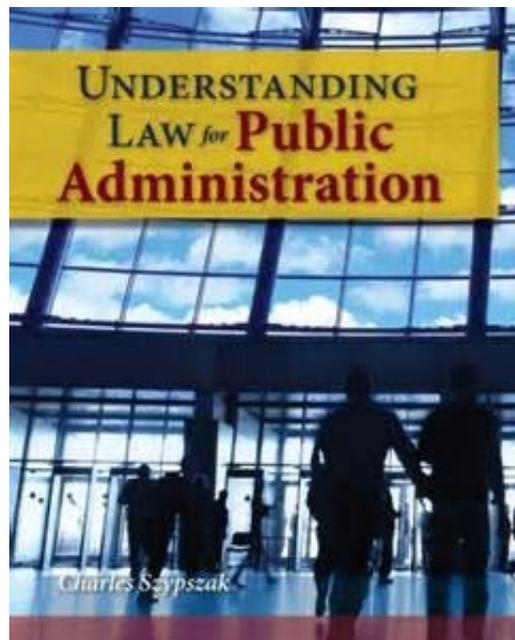
Chuck is being honored for the First Year Seminar that he has taught for the past four years in the Political Science Department—"Thinking About Law." This is the course description:

Are you interested in being a lawyer or public official? Do you know what it means to "think like a lawyer"? Have you considered why people mostly honor the law? Where do you find "the law"? How do judges decide difficult cases? This seminar will explore the notion of a rule of law, formal and customary law, legal analysis, judicial interpretation, and the realities



of the adversarial system and law practice. We will consider what makes law seem legitimate and how to assess whether it promotes liberty and justice. This seminar will challenge students to be reflective and critical about their own perspectives and to explore personal responsibility for promoting a rule of law. Students will be engaged in analytical thinking and expression through readings, classroom discussions, and research and writing assignments. Reading materials will include selections from court cases, scholarly articles, and other sources that provide an introduction to the notion of a rule of law, the sources of law that govern us and protect our individual rights, the nature of legal analysis, the different methods of judicial interpretation, and the realities of law practice and the adversarial system.

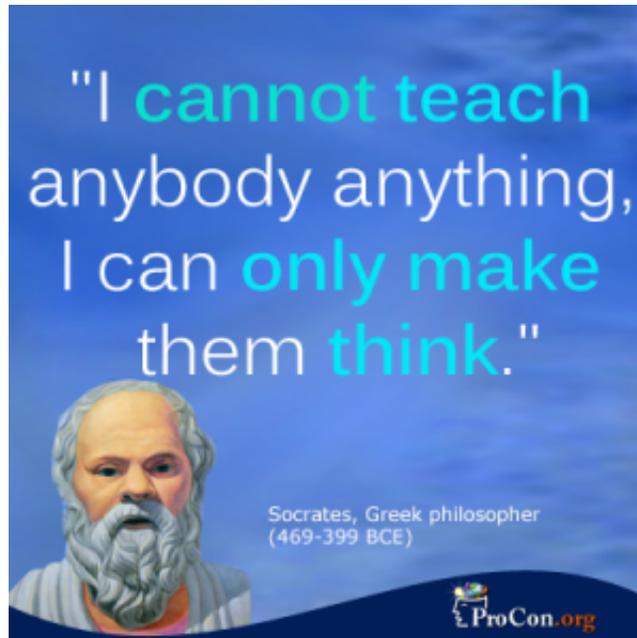
All of Chuck's teaching is designed to make his students think—whether they are undergraduates or registers of deeds. For example, he requires each participant in his advanced registers of deeds course to reflect on their experience in the program and write a paper about what they do well in their office, something on which they can improve, and a suggested legislative reform that would better enable them to serve the public. There was some initial opposition to the paper requirement, but it has turned out to be valuable for the students and for Chuck.



Like so many of our colleagues, Chuck takes his teaching very seriously. He thinks hard about how to teach most effectively about law, and he continuously refines his thinking through a variety of experiences. For example, he has spent time in Poland at Jagiellonian University in Krakow (in



the winter) teaching a doctoral seminar, "Learning Law Through Analytical Dialog," to future law professors, judges, and administrators. He drew on that teaching experience and other experiences to write a peer-reviewed article titled "[Socratic Method for the Right Reasons and in the Right Way: Lessons from Teaching Legal Analysis Beyond the American Law School](#)" in the Journal of Political Science Education. Whether working with undergraduates, MPA students or public officials, Chuck always tries to challenge and improve their analytical reasoning. A representative comment from all of his students came from one who took his undergraduate course—"Extremely hard, but very rewarding."

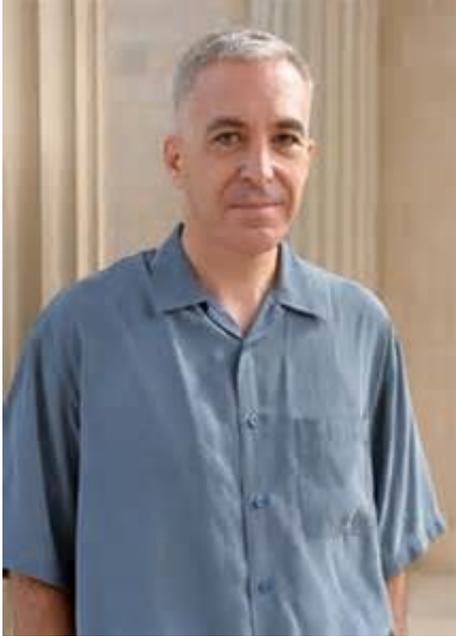


In addition to recognizing our colleague's excellence in teaching, this award sends an important message to faculty in any academic unit that does not have its own undergraduate program—you still can teach undergraduates. Chuck volunteered to teach this course because he wanted the opportunity to teach students during their formative years, and he thought contributing to the undergraduate mission would benefit the School's standing with the University. He also saw teaching law and public administration to undergraduates as consistent with our mission. Chuck figured out a way to teach his course in addition to his other work—without extra compensation or any release time from other obligations. In the past we have considered creating a public service minor for undergraduates, and there is some interest in exploring a role with undergraduates as a priority coming out of the strategic foresight process. Regardless of whether the School pursues its own program for undergraduates, Chuck's experience shows that there is no barrier to teaching undergraduates if you are committed to doing it and make it a priority.

Congratulations again to Chuck on receiving this wonderful honor. Along with other campus teaching award winners, he will be recognized during a half-time ceremony at Carolina's



basketball game on Sunday, February 14. Look for Chuck on the court and on the Jumbotron if you are at the game. There also will be a nice awards banquet to honor all of the award winners in April.



Chuck Szypszak