

Polina Beliakova
Introduction to International Relations (PS 61)
Teaching Evaluations (Sections RA and RG)
Fall 2018

Summary (mean out of 5 points):

Class organization: 4.8

Success in explaining concepts: 4.7

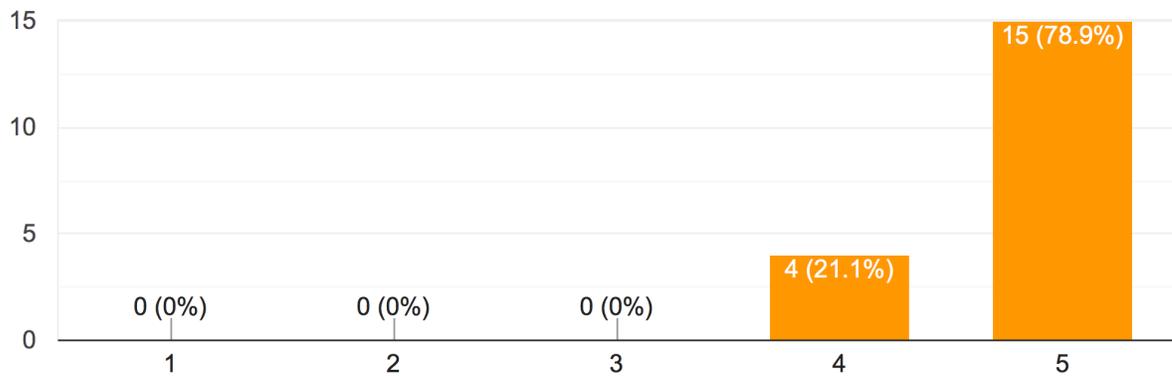
Inclusive learning environment: 4.8

Communication outside of class: 4.5

Overall evaluation: 4.8

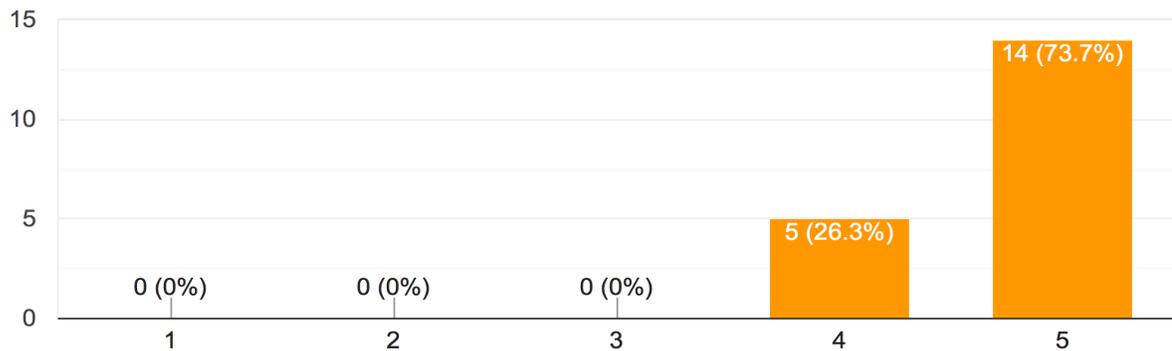
How would you rate the TA's organization of each class?

19 responses



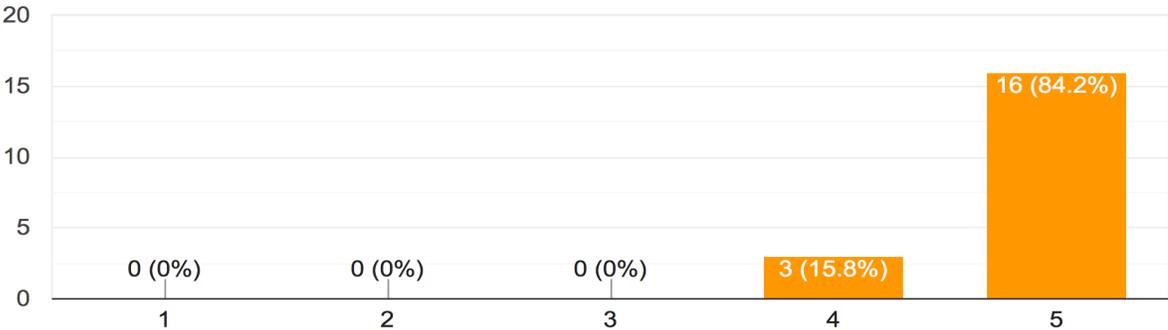
How would you rate the TA's success in explaining concepts?

19 responses



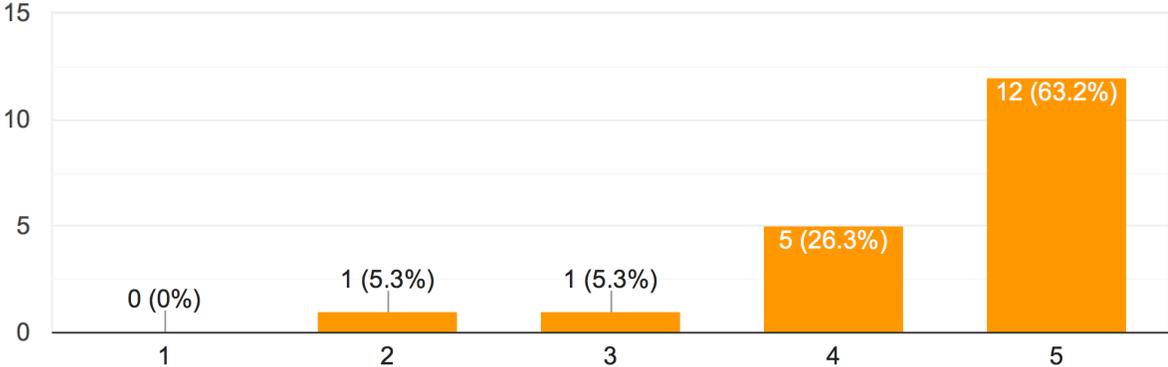
How would you rate the TA's success in creating and maintaining an inclusive class, respectful of all students?

19 responses



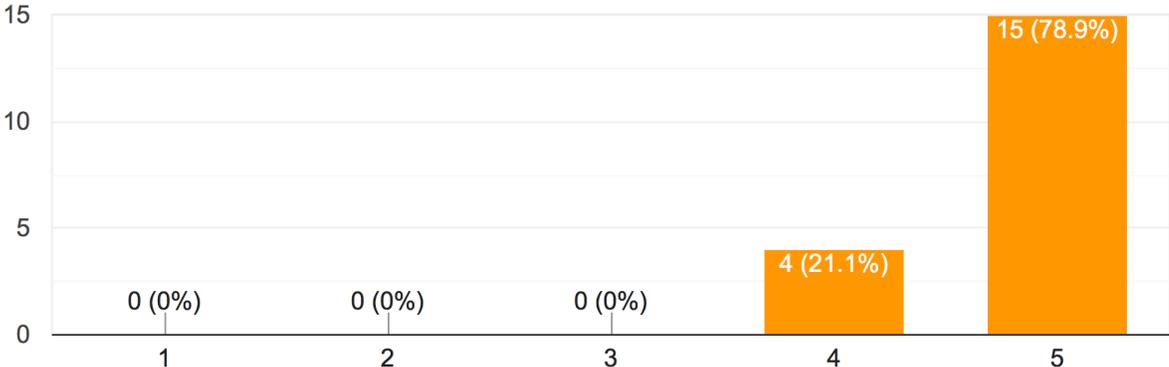
How would you rate the TA's communication with you outside of class?

19 responses



Based on your answers above, and any other factors you consider important, please provide an overall evaluation of the TA

19 responses



In what ways have the discussion sections made you think differently or more deeply? Please provide examples.

I don't always like excessive use of in-class activities, but in Polina's case it was BRILLIANT! The numerous activities she had us engage in forced us to actually use IR language to explain important concepts. If I hadn't had her, I don't think I would've done this at all except for when put on the spot during the in-class exams. It genuinely helped me to understand how this language was supposed to be used and how I should think about making statements that rely on IR theory.

The recitation allowed us to explore very theoretical concepts through more concrete real world events. This gave the students a new and useful perspective on the terms seen on the lecture and created a deeper understanding of the complex world of IR

Polina was very good about challenging our views and making us consider concepts and ideas fully.

Forcing us to make our own arguments in class discussion made me understand the concepts better.

The discussions allowed me to focus more time on more specific issues I was having in the class and allowed me to further expand on my ideas and questions I was having with the class.

Polina encouraged us to apply a lot of IR concepts to modern events which was very useful in helping us remember the IR information.

connecting concepts

I enjoyed Polina's use of current events in relation to IR, which made it easier to understand the concepts.

Gave great real world examples of IR theories and terms which helped me understand them a lot better

Greater emphasis on students coming to answers themselves

The questions fellow students asked were often questions I also had; as such, listening to responses to the questions was very helpful.

It was so important for me to have Polina as I worked through Intro to IR. The concepts were explained to me in raw terms through the lectures and the readings, but I never actually got a better understanding of how to synthesize that raw knowledge into a broader understanding of basic level IR. She explained how different IR theories worked together, especially the fact that no theory disproves another, but one must be a passive observer to the theory. Also, several activities helped me to apply my knowledge before a scary midterm or final: the current events article about China building its first aircraft carrier and its relation to internal balancing of China's military capabilities, the writing workshop where we all had to practice writing a short persuasive essay and had it peer reviewed by their classmates, and the final debate activity where we had to take up stances on IR statements and explained why. If the lectures and readings gave me raw knowledge, then recitations with Polina gave me two, far more important things: critical thinking about IR and the confidence to show what I know.

Polina pushed the class to answer our peers' questions ourselves, instead of answering them herself. It really made me realize that I knew more than I thought I did, and gave me a lot of confidence in generating arguments and answers to questions.

They connected the reading material to the lecture material in helpful ways that furthered my understanding.

Yes they have. I really enjoyed the picking sides activity on the last day of class, especially the questions about cyberwarfare. I enjoyed seeing different perspectives on issues that I had not previously considered in the context of IR.

What aspects of the discussion section worked best to facilitate your learning?

Activities that called on different people from the class to voice opinions using IR terminology, with Polina then clarifying if the person's answer was incomplete or misguided.

Discussion was very open and everyone felt comfortable sharing and discussing ideas.

The charts we made in class together helped me especially

It was best when Polina explained things to us rather than having us work in groups or pairs.

Polina also asked us a lot of review questions which helped me solidify the information we had learned in class.

group discussions

The diagrams were very helpful, I feel like Polina was great at simply explaining things in an understandable way to clear up confusion from class.

Forcing students to talk using IR terminology really helps to see if you know what you're talking about or not

Student-collaborative learning was important; discussion heavy recitation was beneficial to student learning

I found the most helpful part of discussion to be the ability to submit questions via the survey and have them addressed during class.

The explanations of concepts was so key otherwise I would have sunken in the course. Sometimes Polina would torture us to get the answer out of us, and even though it would take up a lot of time in class it seemed to ultimately be functional because it showed us how NOT to think, ie what misconceptions we should get out of our head. Also, Taliaferro talked about realism and liberalism in terms of apples and oranges, but the explanations of how realists and liberals could look at the same apple and call it different things (for example, international institutions, one being driven by the most powerful states interests or not being useful at all, the other serving a collective security in actually creating a safer world (and not glossing over it but actually going into depth)) was key to my understanding and synthesizing of my IR knowledge.

Answering incorrectly and having my answer analyzed in order to learn what not to say and how to improve my future answers.

Going through key terms/schools of thought that the class had questions on– Polina excelled in putting terms in ways that made it easier for the class to comprehend.

When one student asked a question, the students had to answer together so that we did not just leave it up to the TA but rather had to work through it ourselves

Discussion topics in small groups which led into big group discussion were especially helpful to me such as when we were preparing for the second final.

What suggestions do you have for improving the discussion section?

Though it's uncomfortable sometimes, maybe calling on a more diverse group of people so the same people aren't talking all the time. Though I think she did a good job of pushing the people who were having an easier time of grasping concepts to defend and reconsider their arguments.

Sometimes Polina would accidentally mention an upper-level concept that would confuse students, which was tricky.

There just was not enough time to cover everything that we had to cover. I enjoy the depth that we went into when it came to certain subjects but this also resulted in not being able to cover everything.

I would suggest maybe spending less time on each topic or deviating less from the topic at hand so students won't lose their attention or forget what the original topic being talked about is.

agenda of recitation sent out before

get everyone to speak, instead of just the same people volunteering

Nothing in particular; generally positive experience in this recitation

I thought that it was at a strange time, I lost a lot of my IR knowledge from the week before by recitation time. Sorry you can't fix that. I also found some of the students in the class to be extremely boisterous and distracting when their clowning would disrupt the class. I think that it was a super helpful recitation and I would do more of these focused activities that I mentioned above in the future.

I wish we could have done more practice for the exams (e.g. practice short answers, essays, etc). We did these but I wish we could have done more!

Please, provide any additional comments regarding the TA

Excellent experience overall; could share more study resources etc.

I had a really hard time with everything else in the class: lectures, statecraft, and readings, but I am actually sticking with IR because of Polina and our discussion section. Thank you, you really did make a difference for me.

I really enjoyed having Polina as a TA and thought she did a wonderful job.

Nice and encouraging which really helped me learn better, thank you for a great semester!

Polina is so awesome. THANK YOU!

Polina was amazing and very helpful in explaining everything.

Polina was really great and I loved her no-fluff attitude, it made learning difficult concepts be a collaborative process that always cleared up confusion. I learned much more from her than I did in class.

Polina- Thank you so much for all of the time and effort you put into all of us this semester. I really learned a lot from recitation and you are an excellent teacher. I hope to be in touch over the next couple of years

Polina, you were a fantastic TA and I am so glad I was able to have you this semester! I didn't speak much in your discussion section, but I learned a lot throughout the course thanks in huge part to you. Thank you so much for taking the time to work with us every week, we really appreciated the time and effort you put into making us better students of IR.