

Philosophy 505: Seminar in Teaching Philosophy (Fall 2014)¹

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Tuesdays 3:30 pm-5:00pm, Savery 359

Course Objectives:

The goal of this course is to provide a space where new teaching assistants will gain valuable pedagogical skills through self-reflection, sharing ideas with fellow teachers, and a few pedagogical course readings.

Course Structure and Policies:

- The seminar is informal and is offered credit/no credit. We will meet for 1.5 hours, five times throughout the quarter. Despite the informal nature of the seminar, attendance at each meeting is mandatory. If you are unable to attend a scheduled meeting, please make this known to us as far in advance as possible, and we will reschedule the meeting.
- Although each session will be structured around a broad topic, it is both appropriate and desirable that questions, concerns, etc., be brought up as they occur. Do not hesitate to bring up such issues to the class as they occur.
- The sessions will have two parts: in the first half we will reflect on the assigned reading (all readings will be available electronically). The final hour of the class will be a bit more free-form with opportunities to get feedback on questions and concerns with what happened in your classrooms that week.

Requirements

- There are **four** additional requirements for the seminar:
 1. Each student is required to have his/her teaching observed by one graduate student (who may or may not be in this seminar). It behooves you to act quickly on this: scheduling observations can be tricky, time becomes a more scarce commodity for everyone as the quarter progresses, and getting feedback on your teaching earlier rather than later can help you guide your reflections in this seminar and in general. You are responsible for getting the graduate student observer to write you comments and to turn in both those comments and your written reflections on those comments to me (Elizabeth) by December 8th.
 2. Each student is required to observe at least one graduate student who is teaching a 100 level class or 240, either as a TA or as a solo instructor. You must write up comments suitable for the student being observed to submit to the department for their annual peer evaluation; you are responsible for turning in a copy of these comments to me (Elizabeth) by December 8th. It is up to the student being observed to determine whether or not to submit the comments to the department for their official peer review
 3. You will also be asked to keep a basic journal. I would like you to keep track of three things in this journal: first, how many hours a week you are spending teaching (including planning, grading, answering student e-mails); second, please detail at least one challenge per week you have encountered (these challenges will serve as fodder for our class discussions); third, please detail one success or triumph per week (these triumphs will also serve as fodder for our class discussions). These journals may be hand written or electronic, but please have access to them during our class times.
 4. You will be required to attend a teaching workshop organized by the philosophy department. The theme of the workshop most likely will be implicit bias in the classroom. More details to come.

¹ All information in this syllabus is provisional and subject to revision at the instructor's discretion.

Fall Quarter Topics:

Meeting #1: General Introduction / First-Day Activities (September 23rd)

- What are our responsibilities as TAs?
- How do we set the tone we want to set on the first day?
- What are some strategies for being a good colleague to faculty instructors as well as to our fellow TAs?
- **Reading:** Renée Smith and Dennis Earl. *Getting Started: A First-Day Activity in Philosophical Thinking*

Meeting #2: Facilitating Inclusive Classroom Discussions (September 30th)

- What is discussion?
- What can you do if your students won't talk?
- How can you prevent the same few students from dominating class discussions?
- How do you balance discussion and lecture in sections?
- What kind of discussion is possible in a logic class, if any? What are the unique challenges logic TAs face in discussion sections?
- **Reading:** Brook J. Sadler. *How Important Is Student Participation in Teaching Philosophy?*

Meeting #3: Challenges in the Classroom (October 14th)

- What classroom challenges are of particular concern to us?
- What can we do to prevent classroom challenges before they arise?
- How can we ensure that we are offering the right amount of assistance to our students?
- How can we best handle complications that arise between faculty instructors and students?
- **Reading:** Terry Doyle. *Why Students Resist Learning-Centered Teaching*

Meeting #4: Grading (October 28th)

- How do you grade long essay questions? What should we look for when we grade?
- How does grading papers differ from grading exams?
- What can we do to maintain consistency in grading?
- What are effective ways of handling student complaints about grades?
- How do we detect cheating and what do we do if it has occurred?
- How do we handle the time management problem of juggling the demands of grading *and* our professional academic responsibilities?
- **Reading:** Linda L. Farmer. *Grading Argumentative Essays*

Meeting #5: Topic to be determined by you! (November 18th)

Some potential readings:

- Paulo Freire. *Chapter 2 from Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
- Lisa Cassidy. *Appealing to Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom: Using Stick Figures to Teach Philosophy*
- Adam Cureton. *Respecting Disability*
- Christopher Panza, Adam Potthast, and Christie Cathey. *Thinking Outside the Room: Enhancing Philosophy Courses with Online Forums.*
- Joel Marks. *Cheating 101: Ethics as a Lab Course*
- Gordon Tait, Clare O'farrell, Sarah Davey Chesters, Joanne Brownlee, Rebecca Spooner-Lane, and Elizabeth Curtis. "Are There Any Right or Wrong Answers in Teaching Philosophy?": *Ethics, Epistemology, and Philosophy in the Classroom*