POIR 593: Practicum in Teaching the Liberal Arts: Politics and International Relations, Fall 2014
Friday 12 – 2 pm, VKC 104

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Introduction
This is a required seminar for graduate students in the POIR program. This syllabus is very closely modeled after the version of the course taught by Professor Steve Lamy, the founder of the course and its sole instructor until 2014. It is a two-unit credit/no credit course. The main principles behind the course are three: 1) It is to be taught before the TA's first teaching semester or concurrently; 2) It is to be a practicum, focused more on advice and practical principles for effective teaching rather than on any kind of theoretical discussion about education or teaching strategies; 3) One of the main goals of the course is to make students into thoughtful teachers, encouraging not just their immediate success in the classroom, but their long-term development as teachers.

This course is a practicum designed for graduate students in POIR and affiliated departments. It will help prepare you to be a Teaching Assistant at USC but more importantly it will probably be the only time that you think about teaching and explore some practical literature on teaching. Our discussions and activities should help you develop a teaching portfolio. This might help you land a job at a top tier liberal arts college or a larger university that cares about teaching. Unfortunately, few research universities actually do.

Learning Objectives
By the end of the semester, enrolled students will 1) be comfortable with basic techniques for relating successfully to undergraduate students, 2) have learned basic principles of lecture and discussion sessions design and execution with an emphasis on active rather than passive learning, 3) be familiar with basic principles of assignment design and grading techniques, 4) develop a repertoire of techniques for leading and advancing classroom discussion and student learning, and 5) formulate and adopt a strategy for further development as an effective teacher and scholar and begin to assemble a portfolio of teaching materials.

Course Grade
This course will be taught credit/no credit. To pass the course you must successfully complete all assignments and participate fully in class. You must make up missed sessions and if you miss more than one session you will receive a “no pass” grade and you will not be able to be a teaching assistant at USC.

Reading Materials
All assigned readings will be provided for students. Readings for each week are noted for each seminar meeting in the At-a-Glance Schedule table below and include chapters of books, articles, and “case studies,” (usually noted by title only). There are two books from which we will read large selections, and if you would like to buy them, these are the titles:

  Bain, Ken. What the Best College Teachers Do (Harvard, 2004).
  Bok, Derek. Our Underachieving Colleges (Princeton, 2006).
Assignments
Most of our time together will be devoted to making presentations and receiving feedback from your peers and from the instructor. Assignments include: the sharing of findings from readings, presentation of two lesson plans (one for a large introductory lecture class and another for a smaller seminar in any subject area in your field of study), a sample 20-minute lecture presentation; a sample 20-minute discussion session presentation, a sample final examination, and a sample course syllabus. Please either post your assignments to Blackboard or circulate electronically via e-mail to seminar participants.

At-a-Glance Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic / Activity</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>To Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 8/29/14</td>
<td>Introduction (taught by Prof. Steve Lamy)</td>
<td>Nash “Seven Questions” “The French Lesson”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 9/5/14</td>
<td>Problems with our academic community</td>
<td>Bok ch. 2-5 “First Days” “The Dethroned Section Leader”</td>
<td>Share findings from an article in JPSE.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 9/12/14</td>
<td>How do they learn and what makes a great teacher?</td>
<td>Bain ch 1-4 “Good Teaching” “Louis Agassiz” Lunt “Puzzling Student”</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 9/19/14</td>
<td>Preparing and presenting a lecture</td>
<td>Bain ch 5-7 “Teach Naked”</td>
<td>Select classes you will visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 9/26/14</td>
<td>Fieldwork – attend a lecture class at USC</td>
<td>Watch Sandel lecture Lesson plan 1 due (large lecture)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 10/3/14</td>
<td>Fieldwork – attend a seminar class at USC</td>
<td>Lesson plan 2 due (smaller class or seminar)</td>
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<td>7 10/10/14</td>
<td>Grading and evaluating student work</td>
<td>Lantis et. al. “The New International Studies”</td>
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<td>8 10/17/14</td>
<td>Tools for teaching: case study and active learning</td>
<td>“Captain Rockwood”</td>
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<td>9 10/24/14</td>
<td>Sample lecture presentations</td>
<td>Draft of sample syllabus due</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 10/31/14</td>
<td>Sample discussion section presentations</td>
<td>Draft of sample final exam due</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 11/7/14</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 11/14/14</td>
<td>Creating a teaching portfolio</td>
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<td>13 11/21/14</td>
<td>Being judged: student evaluations and interpersonal dynamics</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 11/28/14</td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 12/5/14</td>
<td>Improving the quality of undergraduate teaching</td>
<td>Bok ch. 7, 9, 12 Sample course syllabus and final exam due</td>
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Detailed Schedule of Classes, Readings, and Assignments

Week 1 (August 29): Introduction
Prof. Steve Lamy will teach the introductory class and cover the following topics: active versus passive learning, basic information about being a teaching assistant, expectations for teaching and your own professional plans, and expectations of undergraduates today. For next week (September 5), select an article from the Journal of Political Science Education (JPSE) and share its lessons with the workshop.

Week 2 (September 5): Problems with our academic community
This week we will consider some of the pathologies of higher education by reading and discussing the perspectives of Derek Bok, a former president of Harvard University. We will begin our study of how learning works and workshop participants will share their analysis of findings from an article in the JPSE.

Week 3 (September 12): How do they learn and what makes a great teacher?
The readings for this week and the subject for our discussion address principles of student learning and best practices on how to teach effectively.

Week 4 (September 19): Preparing and presenting a lecture: “loaded” or “naked”
We continue reading chapters of Bain’s book and consider his perspective on what the best college teachers do. We concentrate today’s seminar on how to prepare and present a lecture to a large class, and consider the perspective of teaching without technology (i.e., “naked”).

Come to class with your selection of the 2 classes at USC you will visit for your fieldwork. Select one lecture from any subject area (not including the one for which you are a TA) and sit in on it during week 5. Go to a smaller class or seminar in week 6. Observe, take notes (field notes), and use what you learned to develop a lesson plan for your own lesson plans. What makes for a great class? What practices would you emulate, and what practices did you observe to be not useful?

Week 5 (September 26): Fieldwork – large lecture class
This week you will visit your selected USC lecture class and turn in your lesson plan 1 for a large lecture class. Outside of class, watch Michael Sandel’s lecture on justice (www.justiceharvard.org) and reflect on how this lecture compares with the best lectures you have ever heard. What makes some lectures great? When and why don’t they “work” for you and for other students?

Week 6 (October 2): Fieldwork – small class or seminar
This week you will visit your selected USC small class or seminar, and turn in your lesson plan 2.

Week 7 (October 10): Grading and evaluating student work
This week’s seminar is devoted to strategies for grading and evaluating student work. Distinctive issues may arise when grading for an instructor (as a teaching assistant) and when you are teaching the class. Evaluating student performance in papers, in-class exams, and take-home exams is considered. We will also discuss strategies for dealing with divergences from academic integrity (i.e., cheating and plagiarism).

Week 8 (October 17): Tools for teaching: case study and active learning
This week we consider the method of case study as an active learning teaching tool. We will read the “Captain Rockwood” case and reflect on lessons that can be gleaned.
Week 9 (October 24): Sample lecture presentations
Students will present their sample lectures on a topic of their choosing in any field. In addition, draft versions of your sample syllabi are due today. Please post the document to Blackboard or circulate electronically with seminar participants.

Week 10 (October 31): Sample discussion section presentations
Students will present their sample discussion sections on a topic of their choosing in any field. Draft versions of your sample final examination are due today. Please post the document to Blackboard or circulate electronically with seminar participants.

Week 11 (November 7): No class

Week 12 (November 14): Creating a teaching portfolio
We will review the supplementary materials appended to the syllabus on teaching portfolios. In addition, we will discuss the kinds of classes you might one day choose to teach, and consider the positive and negative aspects of re-teaching familiar material versus taking on new preparations.

Week 13 (November 21): Being judged: student evaluations and interpersonal dynamics
This week's seminar will address the sometimes uncomfortable but ever-present requirement of being judged by one's students. We will discuss a range of interpersonal dynamics that can influence teaching evaluations and the relationship you have with your students.

Week 14 (December 5): Improving the quality of undergraduate teaching
We end the seminar by revising Derek Bok's perspective on improving the quality of undergraduate teaching. After everything you have learned this semester from the readings and from your own experiences in the classroom, how do we improve the quality of undergraduate teaching?
Resources for Creating a Teaching Portfolio
(from the USC Center for Excellence in Teaching and other sources)

OVERVIEW
The best way to document your teaching experiences and accomplishments is with a teaching portfolio. Your teaching portfolio will contain all of the best evidence of your experience and accomplishments, and you will eventually draw selectively from your portfolio when you put together a dossier of teaching materials to apply for jobs.

WHAT BELONGS
These are the kinds of thing that you should be keeping in your teaching portfolio:

1. Teaching Resume
   This is like a version of your CV that focuses exclusively on teaching-related matters and goes into greater depth than your CV. It might contain a list of courses you're prepared to teach, descriptions of your responsibilities for each of your teaching experiences, and numerical evaluations for each course, as well as teaching awards and teaching-specific references. You might even include this teacher development workshop or a sampling of CET events you’ve attended.

2. Teaching Statement
   As described in the Teaching Statement Handout. Keep it to 1-1/2 pages single-spaced at most. You may also include or focus on your teaching-related goals or objectives.

3. Student Evaluations – numerical
   You should have a summary sheet which summarizes all of your numerical student evaluations, and also copies of the original separate sheets for each course, organized chronologically.

4. Student Evaluations – written
   Keep all of your written student evaluations, and as you get more, keep a summary sheet with some of the best in one place, possibly organized topically.

5. Faculty evaluations
   Keep any written evaluation or feedback from faculty or others.

6. Course Materials
   You should also include a range of course materials, both for courses for which you've already taught, and for courses you plan to teach. These may include:
      - Syllabi for courses you’ve taught or TA’d for
      - Syllabi for courses you plan to teach
      - Model lesson plans for past or future courses
      - Model assignments for past or future courses
      - Model examinations for past or future courses
      - Handouts or slides for past or future courses
      - Other auxiliary materials for past or future courses
There are lots of different ways to keep this material organized, but by keeping all of it in one place, you create a great resource for yourself, and you have a pool to draw on in assembling your teaching dossier for job applications at a later date.

Annotated List of Suggested Readings (Professor Mark Schroeder)

I. GENERAL RESOURCES

General Resources: Recommended Buys


This is an up-to-date but well-tested highly general resource on college teaching, covering a wide range of topics with brief and helpful treatments that can be taken one-by-one and found by consulting the table of contents. Definitely worth having on hand as a general resource.


This textbook-style volume is divided into 49 bite-size treatments of practically any issue related to teaching, each including bullet-point general strategies and its own list of further references. It’s a great reference, with ideas and warnings about virtually every topic. Highly encouraged to have on hand as a reference.


This is a collection of seven essays, with an introduction, on some of the most important practical issues raised in teaching. The essays look particularly good.


This is another collection of essays – 25 contributions in all from different authors – covering all aspects of teaching, including preparation of a teaching portfolio and dealing with nontraditional students. It’s a good resource to have on hand to consult about particular topics.

Advice for TAs


This is a highly practical guide written by two successful former TAs at Michigan. It contains detailed coverage from a TA’s point of view of how to prepare for one’s first class, how to get discussion going, how to approach grading, and even a chapter on how to balance teaching with other priorities you have as a student. Highly recommended reading.

This is a textbook-style resource for beginning teaching assistants. The most useful chapters appear to be on leading class discussions and assessing student learning, but many of the other chapters may be useful to consult.


This book consists of about 500 bullet-point ideas, reminders, and warnings, classified hierarchically into about 50 groups split up into six chapters. Helpful groups of topics include “What not to do with Powerpoint!”, “Helping students to make notes – not just take notes”, and others on a wide range of topics. There are a lot of ideas in this book; it’s well worth skimming at least once.

**Resources for Preparing Your Own Course**


This 11-chapter introduction covers the most important issues raised in researching, designing, and planning your own course. It has chapters on course planning, the psychological basis for working memory, learning, and long-term memory, selecting textbooks, constructing tests, grading, and other topics. A definite recommendation for students planning their first course.


This is the only resource I’ve found which specifically addresses the issues specific to teaching courses of 100 students or more, and it’s full of good advice.

**II. METHODS AND PROBLEMS OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY**

**Reading Assignments**

Conceptión, David. ‘Reading Philosophy with Background Knowledge and Metacognition.’ *Teaching Philosophy* 27(4): 351-368.

Great discussion of obstacles students face in reading philosophy, along with over-the-top, detailed example handout for students explaining how to read philosophy and providing useful general background knowledge to make it easier.

**Grading and Evaluation**

Great worked-out example of a grading grid for philosophy papers along with a complete explanation of how it works and its virtues in a very short (six-page) article.

Great supplement to Farmer’s piece on grading grids. Harrell supplements the idea of the grid with a grounding in a rubric that is justified by learning objectives, and most importantly, includes her specifications of exactly what she is looking for under each category. Whereas Farmer admits that part of making the grid successful is careful explicit written expectations but does not include them, Harrell includes them. Also very short.

Writing Assignments

Richardson, Mark. ‘Student Papers and Professional Papers: Writing to Learn and Writing to Teach in Undergraduate Philosophy Courses.’ *Teaching Philosophy* 25(4): 291-309.
Interesting piece by writing instructor about the possible pitfalls of traditional argumentative writing assignments and the virtues of expository writing assignments. A good piece for challenging you to think about why we do the kinds of assignments that we do in philosophy classes and to either justify this or think about how it might be done differently.

Discussion of author’s use of short writing assignments. More interesting for discussion of teaching situation at UMass-Lowell than for discussion of actual writing assignments, but there are a few ideas about ways to approach and grade such assignments.

Strategies for Improving Student Writing

This is a good concrete report on a single teacher’s procedure for peer evaluation of rough drafts. Much of it is obvious, but what is good about it is that it presents a particular strategy in full and is candid about possible risks and shortcomings of different strategies and how they might be mitigated.

This article is about peer-review of writing assignments and pairs well with Scott McDonough’s article. Both authors describe their strategies for peer review in full and consider both advantages and pitfalls. Wilson focuses in particular on the
differences between upper and lower-division courses and on the difficulties in grading peer review assignments fairly and efficiently.

Roberts, Rodney. ‘Teaching Writing-Intensive Undergraduate Philosophy Courses.’ *Teaching Philosophy* 25(3): 195-211.
This article describes a complete set of methods for a highly writing-intensive course, including paper assignments, peer review, and a system of Oxbridge-style tutorials in preparation for the midterm and final papers. It contains a number of interesting ideas, especially about the tutorials.

*General Interest*

Really interesting piece worth listing as recommended reading. Discusses a course that takes college students into the community to teach philosophy in elementary schools by using literature and explains benefits for the college students' understanding of philosophy. A really ambitious program that wouldn't fit into most philosophy curricula but which raises interesting ideas and is well worth reading about.

Fairly predictable piece advocating formal use of surveys inn class. Mostly useful for quite a bit of constructive advice about the details of how to do so, if you do.

Sadler, Brook. ‘How Important is Student Participation in Teaching Philosophy?’ *Teaching Philosophy* 27(3): 251-267.
Contains a fair bit of discussion of the pedagogical merits and potential pitfalls of student participation and of lecture formats, but not a lot that is particularly surprising.

*On Teaching Demonstrations*