Graduate Teaching Seminar
Center for Teaching and Learning
Spring 2019 Thu 3:00pm - 4:00pm MC 2.404

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Course Description

This seminar is geared toward graduate students who want to deepen their pedagogic knowledge and teaching skills. In particular, it offers sessions designed to help graduate students to improve their lecturing, become more effective at leading discussions, and develop active learning strategies. The seminar also discusses issues of cheating, managing students, and conflict situations in the classroom. Lastly, you will gain insights into how to become a more efficient (yet fair) grader.

The seminar consists of ten, one-hour sessions. Each session will introduce you to the current academic literature on the topic to ensure that we are up to speed regarding best practices. The majority of the meeting time, however, is assigned to case studies. These case studies offer an opportunity to apply learned concepts to real world classroom situations. The completion of this course fulfills Requirement #4 for the Advanced Graduate Teaching Certificate.

Course Objective

The course objective is to expose graduate students to cutting-edge research on pedagogy in college classrooms and to derive ‘best practises’ from this literature. For this reason, the content and teaching of this course are focused on providing students with the opportunities to a) understand and evaluate research on pedagogy in the context of university teaching, and b) to reflect on their own approach to teaching in the classroom.

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- identify the key elements of course preparation and syllabus design.
- use techniques designed to improve lecturing and leading discussions.
- implement active learning strategies and create case studies.
- help students prepare for class and manage challenging classroom dynamics.
- design assessments and understand efficient grading procedures.
**Meeting times**

This course is geared towards graduate students and current teaching assistants. We understand that you have many competing expectations on your time, not least because you are taking classes yourself and finishing your dissertations. In particular, the beginning and end of a semester is a particularly stressful time, given that classes have just started or exams and papers need to be completed. For this reason, this courses will not meet for the first couple of weeks of the semester, nor in the last couple of weeks of the semester. We will only meet on the following dates:

- Thu, Jan. 31, 3pm-4pm
- Thu, Feb. 7, 3pm-4pm
- Thu, Feb. 14, 3pm-4pm
- Thu, Feb. 21, 3pm-4pm
- Thu, Feb. 28, 3pm-4pm
- Thu, Mar. 7, 3pm-4pm
- Thu, Mar. 14, 3pm-4pm
- Thu, Mar. 28, 3pm-4pm
- Thu, Apr. 4, 3pm-4pm
- Thu, Apr. 11, 3pm-4pm

**Structure of Class**

Each class has several components:

1. **Why should we care?** (10min)
   - Goal: Motivate today’s topic by illustrating why thinking about this topic critically is important.
   - Approach: Brief summary of existing scholarly research regarding what the positive (negative) effects of particular pedagogical approaches.

2. **What can we do?** (15min)
   - Goal: Introduce specific techniques/activities/approaches.
   - Approach: Brief introduction to best practises derived from the research presented previously.

3. **How does it work?** (20min)
   - Goal: Experience the value of these techniques.
   - Approach: Short case studies allowing students to apply one of these approaches in a “like real life in the classroom” situation.

4. **Will it work?**
   - Goal: Space for reflection (15min)
• Approach: discuss with students whether these approaches are likely to work in their specific field of study/context of teaching (lab vs. lecture, STEM vs. arts, etc.). Purpose is to illustrate that they will need to adjust these approaches to their circumstances and their teaching personality.

Course readings

This is not a required class. For this reason, the readings assigned below are technically not ‘required’ — but they are very strongly recommended to ensure that the seminar is a worthwhile endeavor. You will not need to purchase any books for this seminar. The Center for Teaching and Learning will provide every student with a free copy of the main textbook on the first day of class. The textbook will be:


Similarly, all academic journal articles will be made available on eLearning. All participants will be added to an eLearning group. You can find it by logging into www.elearning.utdallas.edu — the group “CTL Graduate Teaching Seminar” will be listed under “My Organizations” on your start page.

Assignments and Academic Calendar

Unit A) Preparation

1. Designing a course

   • Key questions
     
     – What do I want students to accomplish? Defining learning outcomes and course objectives.
     – How to write a syllabus? Essential syllabus items.

   • Readings
     

   • Further Reading
     
Unit B) In the classroom

2. Improving lecturing

- Key questions
  - How to prepare lectures effectively and efficiently?
  - How to deliver an effective lecture?
  - How to ensure that students understood/retain lecture?

- Readings

- Further Reading

3. Leading Discussions

- Key questions
  - How to prepare discussions effectively?
  - How to manage a discussion? Strategies to encourage participation and guide direction of discussions.
  - How to ensure that students got the key points?
4. Active Learning Strategies

- Key questions
  - Overview over techniques: Small-scale strategies, group-based methods, peer-learning.
  - The challenge of active learning strategies in specific settings: labs, large lectures, small seminars, etc.

- Readings

- Further Reading


5. **Creating Case Studies**

- **Key questions**
  - How to prepare case studies? Overview over essential elements.
  - How to prepare Problem based Learning problems?

- **Readings**

- **Further Reading**

**Unit C) Managing humans**

6. **Helping students to prepare for class**

- **Key questions**
  - Why do students not read or finish their homework?
  - Equipping and incentivizing students to come prepared.

- **Readings**
Further Reading


7. Managing classrooms

- Key questions
  - How to motivate students?
  - How to deal with technology? Laptops, cell phones etc.
  - How to deal with incivility? Classroom persona and strategies for responding.
  - How to deal with traumatizing situations?

- Readings
Further Reading


8. Cheating

  - Key questions
    - How to prevent cheating?
    - How to deal with cheating once it happens?

  - Readings
    - Nielsen: C10
Further Reading

Unit D) Assessments

9. Designing Exams
- Key questions
  - Preparing students for Exams.
  - Constructing good exams and grading guidelines.
- Readings
10. Grading Exams and Giving Feedback

- Key questions
  - How to effectively and fairly grade.
  - How to manage multiple graders for the same class.

- Readings

- Further Reading

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**Grading Policy**

No grades, but expectation to attend every session and to complete the readings prior to our meetings. Also, you must attend every session to receive credit for the Advanced Graduate Teaching Seminar. The completion of this course fulfills Requirement #4 for the Advanced Graduate Teaching Certificate.
Expectations

What I expect of my students

- Willingness to work: As a general rule, I expect you to complete the readings prior to our meetings and to participate in the discussions. In other words, you will need to invest time into this course, otherwise the benefits you will get might not be what you want.

- Classroom etiquette: You are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to the class session for which they are scheduled. Lectures and discussions will not duplicate, but instead will build on, and hence will assume prior familiarity with, assigned readings. Your active, informed and civil participation in discussion and class activities is expected. You are responsible for remaining attentive in class, arriving prepared to discuss course materials, and respecting other members of the class as you and they participate.

What you can expect from the instructor

- I offer a learning environment that challenges you in order to provide opportunities for growth. I will be prepared to the best of my abilities.

- I encourage you to explore your own ideas in response to the assigned tasks. I will be open-minded in responding to your ideas and suggestions. I will offer constructive feedback.

- I am open to constructive feedback from you on my performance. If you have ideas or suggestions, please do not hesitate to discuss them with me. I am committed to make this the best possible classroom experience.

Course Policies

Sexual Harassment

University policy prohibits sexual harassment as defined in the University Policy Statement (http://www.utdallas.edu/legal/title9/contactharass.html and http://www.utdallas.edu/hrm/er/complaints/harassment.php5). This is a serious offense, and I feel strongly about addressing it. Complaints about sexual harassment should be reported to the Dean of Students, Office of Student Life, Student Union Room 1, phone 972-883-6391 or email gene.fitch@utdallas.edu. However, I also want you to know that you can also talk to me as well about any issues that come up.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Participants with special needs are strongly encouraged to talk to me as soon as possible to gain maximum access to course information. It is important to me that everyone who wants to take this class is not prevented from doing so due to special needs. University policy is to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disability conditions (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, or systemic) that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Office of Student AccessAbility and their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. The Office of Student AccessAbility is located in SSB 3.200. Staff can be reached at studentaccess@utdallas.edu or by calling 972-883-2098. For more information see http://www.utdallas.edu/studentaccess/
Statement regarding diversity

I strongly believe that diversity is an asset rather than a liability. For one, in a globalized world you will be exposed to people who are different from you. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that people who are different in almost all cases bring something valuable to the table: Experiences that you can learn from, insights that were not apparent to you, skills that you do not have, or knowledge that you can benefit from. It is my intention to create a learning environment in this class that allows everyone to share their unique strengths. This is not only my personal belief. After all, research shows that the best work is usually produced by groups that combine the different comparative advantages of their group members.

I therefore emphasize that I will welcome anyone to my class, regardless of your sexual orientation, religious observances, political orientation, physical characteristics, cultural background, nationality, or any other characteristic. I recognize that I myself am not perfect, but I promise you to make every effort. If you have any concerns with respect to your acceptance in the classroom I strongly encourage you to talk with me.

Technology in the classroom

Laptops are allowed and even encouraged in the classroom. Bring yours to classes, as we will frequently use it for group activities and short in-class assignments. However, I do expect you to use the laptop for activities related to the class only. That is, no gaming, no facebook, no emails, no chatting. I reserve the right to administer sanctions if your behavior does not align with these expectations.

However, any other technological items such as cell phones, Ipods, MP3 players, pagers, and PDAs need to be turned OFF during class. That’s right: turn it off, rather than just setting it to vibrate. The purpose for this policy is that I want to minimize distractions during class. I do want you to be focused on the learning activities that will be going on. If I notice that you are not paying attention but instead are focused on your cell phone I reserve the right to do something about it.

Further, you are not allowed to make video- or audio-recordings of the classes without my prior permission. I reserve the right to legal action in case I observe you doing so. The reason why the dialogue between professors and students should stay within the closed community of the classroom is simple. After all, academic freedom and completely honest communication in the classroom requires a certain degree of privacy for all the people in the classroom. Students and teachers alike need to be able to be frank, and they need to express their emotions honestly. A video- or audio recording will seriously impede the willingness of students to come forward and engage in an open and honest discussion.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.