

**GRSC 7770: Seminar for Graduate Teaching Assistants
An Introduction to Teaching History**

**Fall Semester 2009
Mondays 5:45 – 7:40 pm, LeConte Hall 102**

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Note: This course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced in advance by the instructor may be necessary.

Welcome to the History Department at the University of Georgia! In your first year here, you'll begin your career as both a teacher and a scholar. While it might seem daunting at first and overwhelming at times, have no fear! This class is specifically designed to assist you in your roles as both teacher and student in the History Department. Our primary goal will be to discuss the methods and practice of successful teaching, but we will also spend time talking about the ins and outs of making progress in graduate school, and how to develop your professional career. We will look at how to plan a fruitful classroom discussion, how to design and grade written assignments and exams, how to teach sensitive topics to a diverse student body, how to effectively utilize technology in the classroom, how to teach writing, and how to develop a professional teaching philosophy, among a range of other topics. This course will help you not only as a TA here at UGA, but in your future teaching career at other institutions.

A note on our schedule: so as not to conflict with your final coursework and papers at the end of the semester, this course will be front-loaded – you'll notice that most of your assignments are due in the first half of the semester. This will also give you maximum exposure to important topics before you grade your first paper, meet with your first student, or teach your first breakout section.

Required Texts

The UGA Handbook for Graduate Teaching Assistants, available at http://wwwctl.uga.edu/teach_asst/teach_asst_support/handbook06.pdf.

Wilbert McKeachie, *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*, Twelfth Edition, 2006.

Assignments

There will be four written assignments in this class:

The first, due **Aug. 24**, asks you to briefly (two or three double-spaced pages) describe your best and worst memories with teachers as an undergraduate student. What instructors motivated and inspired you most, and why? What strategies worked, or didn't work, in the classroom? How might you use your student experience to your own advantage as a new teacher?

The second assignment, due **Aug. 31**, will explore the different ways we grade and assign value to written student work. Each of you will receive two sample student essays, along with two sample “blue-book” exam answers, and you will grade each based on a rough rubric. After grading, you’ll write a paragraph explaining why you gave each the grade you did. In class, we will compare results and discuss the dangers and difficulties of grading student work arbitrarily and fairly.

The third assignment, due **Oct. 5**, will follow your two scheduled TA observations, where you go into a classroom and observe two senior TAs leading discussion sections. In two or three double-spaced pages, discuss the strategies employed by the two TAs, and decide what you thought was successful and what wasn’t. What would you have done differently if teaching the same material?

Finally, the fourth assignment, due **Nov. 30**, asks you to prepare a preliminary teaching philosophy of no more than one single-spaced page. Considering all you’ve learned and observed this semester, what do you believe is the duty and role of teachers in the field of history, and how will you go about fulfilling these goals? While this will clearly be a draft, it will also be a launching pad for a revised document that will be a centerpiece of your portfolio when you go on the job market. Don’t worry too much about this now – we will discuss this in greater detail as we approach it.

Grading and Attendance

This course is graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. To earn an “S” for this course, you are required to attend each of the sessions and prepare for each session by reading the text assigned, completing assignments on time, and participating in class discussions on teaching. Attendance is crucial as well – I will take roll at every meeting, and any unexcused absences in the class will result in an unsatisfactory grade.

Academic Honesty

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty,” available online at http://www.uga.edu/honesty/ahpd/culture_honesty.htm. Each student is responsible to becoming informed about those standards before performing any academic work.

Disability or Health Issues

Students with any disability or health-related issues that will impact their participation in the course should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible. If any unexpected crises or illnesses should arise during the semester, please let me know immediately.

Meeting Schedule

Aug. 17: Introductions / Welcome to the History Department
 Departmental resources
 Staying afloat in graduate school
 Budgeting your time
 ...So you’re a teacher now?
 Reading: TA Handbook, entire

- Aug. 24: Preparing to teach
 Who are your students?
 What is your role as a grader/discussion leader?
 Your legal position
 The first day and first impressions
 Writing a discussion section syllabus
Assignment One due: Best and worst teaching
Reading: McKeachie, Chapter 3
- Aug. 31: Grading: Comments, Criticism, and Communication
 Types of grading: exams, essays, quizzes
 Rubrics and guidelines
 Communication
 Curves and grade-spreads
 Student grade appeals
 Academic dishonesty
Assignment Two due: Grading exercise
Reading: McKeachie, Chapters 7 & 11
- Sept. 7: *No class (Labor Day)*
- Sept. 14: Sensitivity in the classroom and beyond
 Teaching emotionally charged topics
 Race, class, and gender in the classroom
 Sexual harassment
 Politics and their place
Reading: McKeachie, Chapter 13
- Sept. 21: *No class (TA observation #1)*
- Sept. 28: *No class (TA observation #2)*
- Oct. 5: The lesson plan and types of learners
 Fifty minutes: lots of time or really short?
 Types of lesson plans – over-planning vs. under-planning
 Types of learners – and responding to them
 Variety, variety, variety – keeping your students interested
Assignment Three due: Observation write-ups
Reading: McKeachie, Chapters 5 & 15
- Oct. 12: Problems in the classroom and problematic students
 “They’re not doing the reading!”
 Disconnect between professor and TA – lectures, etc.
 In the classroom – “the dominator” and disruptive students
 Office hours – emotional students, “I’ll lose my HOPE”
Reading: McKeachie, Chapter 14
- Oct. 19: Teaching with technology
Meet in Miller Learning Center Rm. 372
GUEST SPEAKER: Sherry Clouser, Center for Teaching & Learning
 Lecturing with technology – pros and cons

What can technology do for us? What *can't* it do?

- Oct. 26: Teaching writing
Can we teach writing? Is it our duty?
Writing as a process, not product
Crafting a writing assignment
Evaluating a writing assignment
- Nov. 2: Maturing as a teacher
Mid-term feedback
Student evaluations – the good and the bad
Learning from yourself and others
Reading: McKeachie, Chapter 26
- Nov. 9: How would you do it? Teaching your own classes
Drafting a syllabus – what can you include?
Choosing readings
Writing & giving lectures
- Nov. 16: Documenting your teaching
GUEST SPEAKER: Cara Gormally, Dept. of Plant Biology
Teaching portfolios
Selling yourself as a teacher
Writing a teaching philosophy
- Nov. 23: *No class (Thanksgiving break)*
- Nov. 30: Wrap-up
Assignment due: Teaching Philosophy