

Teaching Political Science

Fall 2015

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When & where? Wednesdays 5-6:30 pm
in Public Affairs 1256.

Office hours: by appointment.

Course Description

This course is designed to help new teaching assistants (TAs) in the Political Science Department develop the practical skills they will need throughout their first quarter teaching at UCLA. The design of the course is meant to follow the typical schedule of UCLA undergraduate courses, which means that first-time TAs will be exposed to the skills they will most likely need right before they will use them in the classroom. The course is also designed to function as a workshop, so that first-time TAs can practice the technical skills they were exposed to in the reading and course, then receive immediate feedback, and learn from experienced TAs and Professors.

Course Requirements

This course is required for all first-time TAs in the Political Science Department. The course is graded as a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. It has the following requirements:

- **Attendance** is mandatory.
- **Short weekly reading assignments** provide first-time TAs with advice, as well as numerous examples for developing the tools they will need in their teaching.
- **In-class workshop activities** such as curriculum building, role-playing, mini-presentations, group brainstorms that are designed to give first-time TAs the hands-on experience they will need in their sections.
- **TA Section Observation** will be carried out by the Teaching Assistant Consultant (TAC) to observe and evaluate first time TAs during at least one of their discussion sections. This is an opportunity for new TAs to receive constructive criticism that will help them improve their teaching. The observation will be followed up with a one-on-one feedback session with the TAC.

Required Texts

1. Curzan, Anne and Lisa Damour (2006) *First Day to Final Grade: A Graduate Student's Guide to Teaching*, 2nd edition. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
2. UCLA TA Handbook, 2011-2012. UCLA: Office of Instructional Development, 2012.
<http://www2.oid.ucla.edu/publications/tahandbook1>

All course readings will be available on the course website. Supplemental articles will be provided by the TAC.

Additional Resources

- UCLA Office of Instructional Development – TA Resources Page: <http://www2.oid.ucla.edu/units/tatp/resources>
- UCLA TA Mini-Grants <http://www2.oid.ucla.edu/publications/tahandbook1>
- UCLA Teaching Assistant FAQ <http://www2.oid.ucla.edu/units/tatp/faq>

Expectations

The role of the TAC is to help provide first-time TAs with an introduction to teaching at UCLA. The TAC has no role in any employment decisions made by the department. New TAs should not hesitate to send any questions or concerns regarding their teaching. I am available via email and generally respond to e-mails within 24 hours. If you do not receive a reply after this period, please send me a new email. I will hold office hours by appointment.

Schedule

1. Wednesday September 23

Where? Public Affairs 1265

Topics: What to expect on your first day of section, ice-breakers for the first meeting, preparing a section syllabus, managing the course website, keeping track of attendance.

Required reading:

- Curzan and Damour, Chapter 2

Optional reading:

- UCLA TA Handbook (2011-2012) “The TA and University Policy”
- Webb, Derek A. (2005) “Twelve Easy Steps to Becoming an Effective Teaching Assistant.” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, October: 757-761.

Class handouts: Sample TA syllabuses.

Assignment for next week:

- Complete section syllabus and email to TAC (including your meeting times and location)
- Prepare questions for Prof. Thies’ visit next week

2. Wednesday September 30

Topics: Developing a lesson plan, discussing active learning.

Visit by: Prof. Michael Thies.

Required reading:

- Curzan and Damour, Chapter 3
- O’Leary, Rosemary (2002) “Advice to New Teachers: Turn It Inside Out.” *PS: Political Science & Politics*: 91-92.

Optional Readings:

- Berardo, Ramiro (2011) “Speaking with an Accent: Some Practical Advice for Foreign First-Time Teachers.” *PS: Political Science & Politics*: 421-423.

In-seminar workshop: We will focus on developing and implementing a lesson plan. We will make and edit lesson plans in class.

Class handouts: Sample lesson plans.

Assignment for next week:

- Complete your lesson plan and email to TAC.
- Prepare questions for UAW 2865 union officer next week.

3. Wednesday October 7

Topics: Class room management, how to get students to talk (or stop talking), how to phrase your questions to the class, your rights under UAW 2865.

Visit by: UAW 2865 union officer.

Required reading:

- Curzan and Damour, Chapter 4.
- “Active Learning Techniques,” *Teaching Guide for Graduate Student Instructors*, University of California, Berkeley.

Optional Readings:

- Brooks, David (2011) “Getting Students to Talk,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 21.

In-seminar workshop: In small groups we will brainstorm solutions to ‘what if’ scenarios and share results with the class.

Class handouts: ‘What if’ scenarios.

Assignment for the next two weeks:

- Attend an experienced TA’s section and complete the ‘Observation Form’. Do not turn in the form to the TAC but rather bring it to our class on October 21st for discussion purposes. The goal is to maintain the privacy of the experienced TA.

4. Wednesday October 14

Topics: One on one interactions, ‘what if’ scenarios, and mandatory Sexual Harassment workshop (45 mins).

Required reading:

- Curzan and Damour, Chapter 8, pages 150-176.

In-seminar workshop: Students will work in small groups to role-play various scenarios between TAs and students. We will discuss the results of the group exercise as a class.

Assignment for next week:

- Remember to attend an experienced TA's section and complete the 'Observation Form'. Do not turn in the form to the TAC.

5. Wednesday October 21

Topics: how to streamline grading, how to use Turnitin, how to grade in-class essays, how to deal with plagiarism, how to give constructive feedback, and discussion from observation of experienced TAs.

Required reading:

- Curzan and Damour, Chapter 7

Class handouts: Sample Grading Rubric and Sample Student Essay.

In-seminar workshop: First-time TAs will discuss the observations they made during their visit to experienced TA's sections. We will also read an excerpt from a student essay, grade it using a rubric, and then share the results.

Assignment for next week:

- Create a grading rubric that you can use to grade the course paper assigned in the class or the midterm exams. Email the rubric to the TAC.
- Think of questions you would like to ask our panel of experienced TAs.

6. Wednesday October 28

Topics: Class room management, keeping sections interesting, 'what if' scenarios, midterm evaluations, and Q & A with a panel of experienced TAs.

Required reading:

- Curzan and Damour, Chapter 5, p. 68-87

Optional reading:

- Beavers, Staci (2011) "Getting Political Science on the Joke: Using the Daily Show and Other Comedy to Teach Politics." *PS Political Science & Politics*: 415-419.

In-seminar workshop: Q & A with a panel of experienced TAs.

7. Wednesday November 4

Topics: How to help undergraduates with writing, resources available to undergraduates to improve their writing, differences between lower and upper division course requirements, holding review sessions.

Required reading:

- Curzan and Damour, Chapter 6, pages 99-106

- Baglione, Lisa (2008) “Doing Good and Doing Well: Teaching Research Paper Writing by Unpacking the Paper.” *PS Political Science & Politics*, 595-602.

Optional reading:

- Weismal-Manor, Israel and Daniel Sherman (2003) “Get it in Writing: Using Politics to Teach Writing and Writing to Teach Politics.” *PS Political Science & Politics*: 755-757.

Class handouts: Writing checklist for students.

In-Seminar Workshop: We will practice techniques for helping students learn how to revise and edit their papers.

Wednesdays November 11 & 18: TAC Observations

During these weeks the TAC will visit your discussion sections and provide feedback. We will not be meeting these weeks. Remember that Wednesday 11 November is Veteran’s Day and a university holiday.

Wednesday November 25: No class (Thanksgiving)

8. Wednesday December 2

Topics: What happens after the class is over: letters of recommendation, managing relationships with students, interaction outside classrooms, evaluation forms.

Required Readings:

- Curzan and Damour, Chapter 5, pages 88-91

Optional Readings:

- “Writing Letters of Recommendation,” *Teaching Guide for Graduate Student Instructors*, University of California, Berkeley.
- “Evaluating and Improving Your Teaching,” *Teaching Guide for Graduate Student Instructors*, University of California, Berkeley, p. 5-9.

Class handouts: Sample letters of recommendation and time management worksheet.

In-Seminar workshop: We will brainstorm ways of doing final exam preparation, and also assessing our performance. We will reflect on our first quarter and discuss strategies for the future.