

AMST 878: American Studies Pedagogy Mentoring

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Course meetings: Introduction on 8/28 and 4 two-hour meetings throughout the semester. Time TBD. All in 2113 Susquehanna.

Description:

Teaching cultural studies and theory to undergraduate students is very different from learning it in graduate seminars. But quality teaching is not a matter of natural gifts. There are proven methods, principles, and resources on which all novice teachers can rely. AMST 878 is designed to give first-year graduate teaching assistants an introduction to some of the methods and theories of teaching and learning in higher education, with a focus on issues specific to American Studies. The course was put together in response to graduate student requests for some training in 'the fundamentals' as they began working with undergraduates. This seminar is more of a workshop and it takes the 'mentoring' title seriously. So while there will be assigned readings, the focus is on explaining your methods, developing plans, and, most importantly, giving and receiving feedback from your peers. 878 is a two-course sequence that combines a spring seminar on theory and preparation for those who will teach the next semester with a fall seminar on practice for those currently beginning to teach. This semester especially is a work in progress so the sequence, its structure, and its content can and should be changed to reflect the needs of graduate teaching assistants and their undergraduate students.

Learning Outcomes:

After completing AMST 878 students will be able to:

- Plan for and start running class sessions and class projects which keep students engaged and motivated.
- Design learning outcomes, methods to assess them, and ways to change your practice if students aren't learning.
- Plan for and adapt to the different needs of different students, as well as conflicts between students and between students and instructors.
- Describe their personal philosophy of teaching.
- Compose critiques of peers' classroom methods and respond to the same.

General Structure

Course meetings will be attached to the regular graduate teaching assistant meetings which Prof. Struna holds throughout the semester, taking up the last hour or so (Fall 2013 schedule to be determined). Your peers with prior teaching experience are thus another good resource and may well sit in on our meetings too. There will also be an online component where students will have to respond to readings, share critiques of peers' methods, and pose questions to the rest of the group. Readings are designed to give a good coverage of best practices, issues currently important on the job market, and basic principles which AMST instructors may reform or critique based on the content of their classes.

Course Requirements

Workshop Participation: 25% of final grade

Attendance, insightful participation, comprehension of and responses to assigned readings is essential to everyone's getting the most out of the workshop.

Two Observations and Two Reflections: 25% of final grade

Students must observe another student teaching a whole class session and be observed in turn *twice* throughout the semester—so by the end of the semester you'll be observed twice and observe someone else twice. You can do this with another student in the workshop, with a more senior graduate assistant, or with a faculty mentor. Meet with your partner after observations to discuss what you both saw and to ask questions. It is best if observing and being observed happens in short order (e.g., A observes B one week, then B observes A the next week, completing one set of observations) because students must then compose a brief essay comparing their teaching strategies, reviewing classroom incidents, and reflecting on what they learned about their own practice—approximately 2 typed pages. The first reflection must be posted online by **Friday, October 18**. The second reflection must be posted online by **Friday, December 6**.

Blog Posts and Peer Responses: 25% of final grade

One week prior to each meeting, students must have posted a 500-word response to some aspects of the readings online. This may come in the form of a reflection on your own practice or a particular classroom incident it relates to, a comparison between readings, a response that situates the writer's theories or advice within the specifics of your field or American Studies more generally, a potential assignment or syllabus that it makes you think of, etc. The only basic requirement is that students meet the word count and deadline, demonstrate a grasp of some of the readings' core ideas, and apply them in some way.

Posts are required a week before meeting so that students can review each other's posts and compose a 250-word response to one of their peers before the day of the meeting. Because we don't meet every week, it's important that we stay engaged as a group and keep working on these ideas together. The online space for the class is one way of doing this. **For the last meeting, your draft teaching philosophy substitutes for a blog post and response.** Though you are course welcome to do an additional blog post if you want to work through a particularly provocative reading or anything else that's been on your mind.

Teaching Philosophy: 25% of Final Grade

Students will compose a 3-page statement of teaching philosophy as the final project for the course. This includes not only why and what you teach but especially *how*: how you promote and assess student learning, how you engage students, how you challenge students, how you mentor students, and how you manage the classroom. A teaching philosophy is a crucial part of any job application packet. This is preparation for the academic job market that is meant to get you thinking about what sets your teaching apart from others. Example teaching philosophies and best practices for them will be posted online. **The teaching philosophy is due on the last meeting, post it online in place of a blog post and we'll read and discuss them together.**

Reading Schedule

August 23: Introductions

Meeting 2: Assessment, or, "Rarely is the Question Asked: Is Our Children Learning?"

- Barr, Robert and John Tagg. "From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education." *Change*, November/December 1995.
- Bass, Randy. "The Scholarship of Teaching: What's the Problem?" *Inventio* 1.1 (1999)
- Heiland, Donna and Laura Rosenthal. Introduction to *Literary Study, Measurement, and the Sublime: Disciplinary Assessment*. New York: The Teagle Foundation, 2010.
<http://www.teaglefoundation.org/disciplinaryassessment/toc.aspx>

- One other chapter of your choice in Heiland & Rosenthal.
- Suskie, Linda. "What is Good Assessment?" in *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series, 2009. 36-54

Meeting 3: Assignments and Grading, or, Teaching to the (Right) Tests

Readings are light this meeting. We'll spend about half the meeting talking about effective grading practices. The other half should be devoted to grading different things from those we normally grade. To help this along, please prepare a brief prompt (no more than two paragraphs) for either a future assignment you might be using this semester or an alternative assignment that you could see yourself offering if you taught your current class again. Feel free to integrate this with your blog post in some way (i.e., you might build a prompt and rubric and then explain why you did it the way you did, or you might build a prompt and rubric in response to a specific learning demand or pedagogy issue that you address in your blog post). This assignment has to be something other than a research paper, presentation, or exam. Use your imagination, have fun. What would it be? What would it test? Why is it valuable? And how would you grade it? We'll share and discuss these in workshop.

- Mary Churchill and Michael Brown. "Grading Hatred", "The Difficulties of Grade Reform", and "How Grades Make Students Want to Cheat" *The Chronicle of Higher Education* <http://chronicle.com/blogs/old-new/grade-hatred/91> ; <http://chronicle.com/blogs/old-new/the-difficulties-of-grade-reform/98> ; <http://chronicle.com/blogs/old-new/how-grades-make-students-want-to-cheat/104>
- Cathy Davidson. "How to Crowdsource Grading" *HASTAC* 26 July 2009 <http://hastac.org/blogs/cathy-davidson/how-crowdsource-grading>
- Be sure to read the comments section. It includes a lot of veteran innovators (Lisa Duggan, Katie King, Ian Bogost) talking about their feelings on contract grading and grading generally. Think about why, in a setting where we're encouraged the question the bedrock assumptions of cultural knowledge and social institutions, we rarely question the value or process of grades.
- David Adams' review of *Effective Grading* by Barbara Woolvard and Virginia Anderson <http://cla.auburn.edu/cla/assets/docs/assessment/Summary%20of%20Walvoord%20and%20Anderson%20Effective%20Grading.pdf>

Meeting 4: Engagement, or, Students Who Buy in Learn More

- Berkley, Elizabeth. "A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Student Engagement" and "Student Engagement Techniques: Analysis and Critical Thinking" in *Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series, 2009. 1-39 and 186-215
- [the Student Engagement Techniques are a set of potential teaching activities. They're related but separate. There are eight in 186-215, feel free to focus on the four that you're drawn to.]
- Codde, Joseph. "Applying the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Higher Education." <https://www.msu.edu/user/coddejos/seven.htm>
- Mittel, Jason. "Thoughts on Teaching Theory to Undergrads." *Just TV* 18 August 2012. <http://justtv.wordpress.com/2012/08/18/thoughts-on-teaching-theory-to-undergrads/>
- Nelson, Craig. "On The Persistence of Unicorns: The Trade-off Between Content and Critical Thinking Revisited" in Bernice Pescosolido and Ronald Aminzade (eds.) *The Social Worlds of Higher Education: Handbook for Teaching in a New Century*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Press, 1999. 168-185
- Rosenthal, Laura. "Teaching and Metacognition." *The Long Eighteenth* 12 November 2010 <http://long18th.wordpress.com/2010/11/12/teaching-and-metacognition/>

Meeting 5: Conflict, or, Dealing with Privilege and Power in the Classroom

Note: Please post your teaching philosophy online instead of a blog post this time around.

- Summary of Lisa Delpit's *Other People's Children* at the Harvard Educational Review. <http://www.hepg.org/her/booknote/293>
- Banks, James. "Multicultural Education: Historical Development, Dimensions, and Practice." *Review of Research in Education* 19 (1993): 3-49.
- Tatum, Beverly. "Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" in Karen Rosenblum ed. *The Meaning of Difference: American Constructions of Race, Sex and Gender, Social Class, Sexual Orientation and Disability*. 6th edition. McGraw-Hill: 2008. 213-222