

Seminar for Graduate Teaching Assistants

Room: Baldwin Hall 102

POLS 7770, Fall 2021 Monday 6:30-9:15

Instructor: Aaron A. Hitefield
email: aaron.hitefield@uga.edu
Office: TBD
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to teaching political science as a graduate assistant at the University of Georgia. It is a discipline-specific equivalent to the GRSC 7770–Level 3 course required for all new graduate teaching assistants by the University. The class is designed to prepare teaching assistants for their new role at the University of Georgia as well as for potential careers involving instruction at other institutions or in other professional capacities.

The course is front-loaded so as to ensure that students will have maximum exposure to important topics before they encounter them in the classroom. This format will also allow the class to better meet your needs as a developing teacher throughout the semester.

Reading

There is one required text for this course:
UGA Teaching Assistant Handbook. Available online at: <https://ctl.uga.edu/grad-student/resources-and-ta-handbook/ta-handbook/>.

Any other readings will be posted on ELC.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the UGA Disabilities Services office will be accommodated according to university policy. If you have documentation for accommodations from Disabilities Services, please present it to me as soon as possible. For more information, contact Disabilities Services at 706-542-8719. If you cannot reach the classroom or my office, please notify me as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a core value of institutions of higher learning. All students, upon enrolling, must pledge: “I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.” It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism, cheating, and dishonesty. The university policy on academic integrity is posted at:

<http://www.uga.edu/honesty/>. To qualify the application of the policy in this course: tests and written assignments should be your own work, while studying and class preparation can (and should) be done with others.

Mental Health and Wellness

- If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu/>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.
- UGA resources for mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).
- If needed, consider also visiting BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

The course is graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis. If you have more than two unexcused absences, you will receive an Unsatisfactory grade. In addition, because the grading criteria are quite broad, your written work will receive comments rather than a conventional letter grade, as my main concern is that you complete the work. Failure to complete assignments in a timely fashion will result in a grade of Unsatisfactory.

Attendance & Participation: Attendance for this class is required, but you will be allowed two unexcused absences; any more will result in an Unsatisfactory grade for the class. Furthermore, it is expected that you will participate in all in-class assignments, discussions, and group activities. Just as you expect your own students to participate fully, so will I expect the same of you.

Lesson Plan: You will design a lesson plan for one class, with direction toward incorporating an innovative or creative approach to teaching political science. Bring enough copies for your classmates, as well as a copy to turn in to me. We will revisit the lesson plans later in the semester. These will be due (as a hard copy) by the September 13th class meeting.

Midterm Evaluation Exercise: Using the sample questions we will devise in the September 27th class meeting, create a midterm evaluation form for your class and implement it. Summarize the responses in a 2-page report, detailing the overall response from your class and how you plan to address your students' concerns for the remainder of the semester. This assignment is due (as a hard copy) at the October 25th class meeting.

Peer Observations: An important part of learning how to teach is responding to constructive criticism. You will observe two of your peers teaching their discussion sections and provide a short written review based on an evaluation form that I will provide to you. You may not observe on a test day or on a day reserved for returning and covering graded tests. These will be due to me by December 6th (as a hard copy).

Revised Teaching Philosophy Statement: By the September 27th class meeting, I expect you to provide a preliminary draft of your teaching philosophy, a document in which you will outline your approach to teaching political science, as well as the principles that will guide you in your

instruction. Near the end of the semester you should have sufficient teaching experience to revise and update this teaching philosophy. Revisit your first draft and make changes that reflect your growth as an instructor over the semester. The revised teaching philosophy statement will be due (as a hard copy) November 29th.

Course Schedule

Date

- Aug. 23 – Introduction and Syllabus
- Aug. 30– Lesson Plans: Tips for Designing a Successful Discussion Section
- **Sept. 6 – Holiday: Labor Day - No Classes**
- Sept. 13 – Teaching Philosophy Statement
 - ***Lesson Plans Due – By beginning of class***
- Sept. 20 – *Academic Honesty – Guest Lecturer*
 - Speaker: *Office of Academic Honesty*
- **Sept. 27 – Student Evaluations
 - ***Preliminary Teaching Philosophy Statement Due - By beginning of class***
- **Oct. 4 – Student Conduct and Behavior– *Guest Lecturer*
 - Speaker: *Office of Student Conduct*
- Oct. 11 – Security and Emergency Preparedness – *Guest Lecturer*
 - Speaker: *John Newton, PhD—Office of Emergency Preparedness—Assistant Director*
- Oct. 18 –Time Management, Office Hours, and Student Communication
- Oct. 25 – Institutional Diversity
 - ***Midterm Evaluations Due – By beginning of class***
- Nov. 1 – Group Based Learning
- Nov. 8 – Classroom Discussion: How Do We Improve?
- Nov. 15 – Professionalization Meeting (***Topic and Speaker - TBD***)
- Nov. 22 – Professionalization Meeting (***Topic and Speaker - TBD***)
- Nov. 29 – Helping Students Think and Write Critically
 - ***Revised Teaching Philosophy Statement Due – By beginning of class***
- Dec. 6 – Documenting Your Classroom Experience
 - ***Peer Observations Due – By beginning of class***

**Note: Dates undecided, topics on dates in question may flip due to speaker's availability.