

## Regularly Offered GRAD 701 Workshops, Fall Semesters

★ = Recommended

✓ = Applicable to responsibilities

RFFR – Not directly applicable, but recommended for future reference

Sessions are offered on multiple days of the week, varying times of day.

*Registration is NOT required – all sessions will be held as scheduled (unless otherwise notified).*

	<b>GRAD 701 Session Topics</b>	<b>Approx. # Repeated</b>	<b>Instructor of Record</b>	<b>Laboratory Assistant</b>	<b>Grader</b>	<b>Recitation Leader</b>	<b>Discussion Leader</b>	<b>Tutor/Office Hrs</b>
1	Active Learning Techniques for Any Discipline	1-2	✓	✓		✓	✓	RFFR
2	Developing Assessments of Student Learning	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Balancing the Multiple Roles of Graduate Students	2	★	★	★	★	★	★
4	Best Practices for Grading Objectively	2	✓	✓	★	✓	✓	✓
5	Dealing With Disruptive Student Behavior	1	✓	✓		✓	✓	RFFR
6	Developing a Course Syllabus	1	★	★	✓	✓	RFFR	RFFR
7	Developing Your Teaching Persona	2	★	✓	RFFR	✓	✓	✓
8	Fish Bowl: Discussing Current Issues of TAs	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Getting Good Teaching Evaluations	1	✓	✓		✓	✓	
10	Interacting With Students Appropriately & Professionally	1-2	★	★	★	★	★	★
11	Leading a Good Discussion Session	2	✓	✓		✓	★	✓
12	Leading a Good Laboratory Section	2		★		✓		
13	Leading a Good Recitation/Problem-Solving Session	1		✓		★		✓
14	Overcoming Apathy & Maintaining Student Motivation	1-2	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
15	Planning a Good Class Presentation	1	★	✓	RFFR	RFFR	RFFR	RFFR
16	The Tip Jar: General Teaching Tips for New TAs	1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Writing Good Multiple-Choice Questions	1	✓	✓	✓	RFFR		

# GRAD 701 Session Descriptions

## 1. Active Learning Techniques for Any Discipline

Active learning is a student-centered approach in which pre-planned activities are used to engage the student as an active participant in their learning. Techniques such as think-pair-share, one-minute paper and other such exercises have been shown to improve student learning and retention of material and can enhance the presentation format of a course. However, active learning strategies can be difficult for new instructors to implement because they require preparation and skills in guiding and moderating the learning activity. In this workshop, we will examine the three fundamental principles of learning integrated into active learning techniques, explore the planning system necessary to incorporate them and attendees will actively participate in numerous active learning techniques applicable to a wide range of classroom settings. Join us to learn helpful tips on what you can do, how to do it, and why active learning in the classroom is important to student learning.

## 2. Developing Assessments of Student Learning

Student learning is 'assessed' in its most basic form via grades. But grades should only be the end result of a series of measures, or assessments, implemented by instructors to fully evaluate what students are actually learning and understanding. Assessment types will certainly vary depending on the content, course structure and size, delivery modality, and individual instructor. Depending on the assessment method used, instructors can measure "in the moment" a student's level of comprehension (relative to Bloom's Taxonomy), critical thinking, skill development, and achievement of learning outcomes. Not only do good assessments help students learn in tandem with instruction, they also engage students directly with the material and provide feedback to the instructor as to quality of instruction so that corrections can be made as needed. This session will highlight the breadth and scope of assessment methods, both formal and informal, and best practices for implementation whether in small or large classes, online or face-to-face. Practice examples will be shown to illustrate the value of different assessment types that effectively and objectively measure achievement of different kinds of learning outcomes.

## 3. Balancing the Multiple Roles of Graduate Students

Graduate students must handle a myriad of responsibilities during the span of their graduate studies (e.g., teaching, research, coursework, etc.). Meeting the high expectations of these academic demands is challenging at best, and for many students, stressful, overwhelming, and guilt-inducing due to the competing demands of their professional and personal life. How to balance and find time for each of these facets is not a skill that graduate students automatically know! Recognizing your stresses, defining both short-term tasks and long-term goals, and learning how to prioritize are key to beginning to find your balance. This workshop will help you learn to recognize different levels of stressors in your life by interactively applying the Covey Time Management Matrix and other reflective-thinking tools to your own situation. Advice for managing your workload, prioritizing your responsibilities, and identifying personal traits that may be contributing to this imbalance will be given, and discussion with other participants will be encouraged to help you begin to gain perspective on your graduate school experience.

#### **4. Best Practices for Grading Objectively**

The responsibilities of all GTA/IAs typically include grading student work. Yet grading objectively involves many important considerations and strategies of which TAs are often not aware. When grading at any level, a TA needs to consider: what is their “grading philosophy” for the course, how will they ensure consistency, fairness, and objectivity, and just as importantly, how will they remain efficient. Grading should be used as a form of constructive feedback to students, differing depending on the assessment type. How to provide this feedback and use rubrics effectively will also be discussed.

#### **5. Dealing with Disruptive Student Behavior**

A student's cell phone buzzes while you're lecturing. The class snickers as the student checks it and sends a text in front of you. In a classroom discussion, a student uses charged language and other students become visibly distressed. Grades have been posted, and an upset student sends you an email challenging his final project and class grade. What do you do in these situations? How do you handle other challenging classroom disruptions? This session will provide examples of scenarios that can (and will) happen, along with the best (and worst) ways for handling and defusing situations, and best practices for preventing these scenarios from happening in during your teaching.

#### **6. Developing a Course Syllabus**

Many of our instructors tell us that they wish they had been provided guidance in developing a syllabus before they taught their first course. In this workshop, we will begin to develop a syllabus for a course you may teach in the future. We'll discuss the importance of learning outcomes, and participants will interactively craft one as we discuss their role in the syllabus. Using the backwards design model and development of a thoughtfully designed learning outcome, participants will then create a quality learning activity or assignment, formulate the appropriate assessment, and finally, determine the most effective method for teaching that activity. Other tips and advice for syllabus development, along with examples of good and bad syllabus construction, will be discussed with other participants in a small group setting.

#### **7. Developing Your Teaching Persona**

Good teaching involves creating a teaching persona: your personal teaching style that is a balance between your authentic self and your professional self. Developing your teaching persona includes finding a personal classroom management style that's right for you as you promote student learning. Thinking about this facet of teaching is important for new instructors and can be a helpful reflective exercise for more experienced instructors. This workshop will provide you with specific, interactive guidance and best practices on developing specific aspects of your teaching persona and style, along with helpful advice for any who are still learning to become comfortable in front of a classroom.

## **8. Fish Bowl: Discussing Current Issues of TAs**

It's later in the semester...and you've probably had some "issues" crop up during your GIA/TA responsibilities. Using a popular active learning technique called "Fish Bowl", participants write on a slip of paper specific issues, questions, or concerns they have and place them in a fish bowl. The facilitator will then draw these topics out individually, and discuss their own strategies for dealing with each situation while encouraging discussion with other participants. Bring your issues, concerns, questions, and be willing to contribute to an interactive discussion!

## **9. Getting Good Teaching Evaluations**

The best way to get good teaching evaluations from your students is from the beginning, by being a good teacher. Good teaching involves developing your teaching persona, balancing content mastery and course rigor with a commitment to student learning while encouraging interpersonal rapport. Tips for developing these skills will be discussed, along with common mistaken assumptions of instructors countered by a more realistic, positive viewpoint of teaching skill development. We will review the questions on USC's course evaluation form and discuss them in the context of best practices for being a good teacher.

## **10. Interacting with Students Appropriately & Professionally**

A concern of many new teaching assistants regards the level of appropriate interaction considered acceptable with respect to the instructor-student relationship. Should you "friend" your students on social networking websites? How do you maintain a professional, but helpful, boundary? What is considered inappropriate interaction? These questions and more will be discussed in this workshop, using scenarios in which participants will "act out" a situation and then discuss the proper professional response to these scenarios.

## **11. Leading a Good Discussion Session**

To new instructors, discussion sections, even informal classroom discussions within a lecture setting, may seem nerve-wracking and difficult to facilitate. The ability to ask "good" questions – thought-provoking, critical thinking, at a deeper level of thinking – and the application of this technique in discussion sections and classes, is often an overlooked and underdeveloped skill of instructors. What you will find is that even discussion sessions take planning and preparation (and practice). In this workshop, effective methodologies and best practices for asking good questions, techniques and styles for leading and facilitating classroom discussions as well as directing student responses will be addressed and modeled. TAs at all levels of teaching and experience are welcomed.

## **12. Leading a Good Laboratory Section**

While teaching laboratory sections may seem like a "piece of cake" to an outsider, in reality they are multiple-hour classes that require numerous instructional skills, including detailed planning, content mastery and presentation, implementation of experiments, classroom management, troubleshooting, and interactive student assessment. In this workshop, GTA/IAs will be given guidance in how to facilitate an engaging, learning-centered laboratory session, as well as tips on effective grading strategies for laboratory-style assessments. Discussions of particular issues with other laboratory GIA/TAs will be encouraged.

### **13. Leading a Good Recitation/Problem-Solving Session**

The responsibility of a GTA/IA leading a recitation session is a bit different from instruction in other courses – what is expected of you, what is expected or required of your students, and how do you effectively facilitate this unique classroom setting? How do you deal with student issues such as non-interaction, attendance problems, or non-preparedness? These issues and more are discussed along with tips from prior Recitation Leaders across campus. All GTA/IAs are welcome to this discussion session even if your primary responsibility is not a Recitation Leader.

### **14. Overcoming Apathy and Maintaining Student Motivation**

Students today are sometimes called the "Apathetic Generation." With the constant presence of distractions from technology influencing a student's interaction with the world around them, students' attention spans are shorter and communication skills are in decline. It seems more and more difficult to engage today's students in a traditional classroom setting. However, there are specific strategies that you as a TA can use to enhance your teaching style and engage students from the first class, and maintain that engagement throughout the semester. Learn different techniques to develop a personal connection with your students, encourage preparation and student involvement in your class, provide motivational feedback, and expect (and receive!) excellence from your students. These strategies to engage students can be applied in small classrooms as well as in large lecture-hall style courses.

### **15. Planning a Good Class Presentation**

Part of the role of many GIA/TAs is providing course content to students. Whether the format involves a whiteboard, chalkboard, PowerPoint, pure lecture, or combinations of these, the old "sage on the stage" format of lecturing still used by the majority of instructors simply does not address the learning styles of students in this technological age. In preparing a presentation, an instructor must consider this issue of engaging different learning styles, as well as addressing course learning outcomes, the connection between content, assessments, application, and student expectations. We will discuss the importance of, and techniques for, factoring in these considerations, along with preparation strategies and speaking tips, and a few "best practices" for the use of Microsoft PowerPoint as a presentation tool.

### **16. The Tip Jar: General Teaching Tips for New TAs**

While it is definitely exciting, your first graduate teaching or instructional assistantship can also be quite overwhelming, especially if you have no teaching experience. Concerns and questions are likely swirling in your head: How do you conduct yourself in class? What is expected of you by your advisor? How much preparation does it take? What if you're nervous? How do you deal with problem students? How do you develop a teaching style? These and many other questions are addressed in this helpful "Tips" workshop for new GIA/TAs to make your teaching experience more successful and more efficient. Experienced TAs are welcome to share their stories and experiences as well.

### **17. Writing Good Multiple-Choice Questions and Exams**

Large classes often necessitate using exams with multiple-choice questions (MCQs) to assess student learning and streamline the grading process. However, many problems exist with these types of questions, in particular the difficulty in assessing higher level learning or deeper understanding. Further, it can be difficult for instructors to write "good" questions that actually assess what is

intended. How do instructors write good MCQs that ask students to do more than simply regurgitate facts and content? In this workshop we will explore the structure of MCQs along with their strengths and inherent weaknesses. Participants will learn how to create effective questions based on quality learning outcomes, with practice constructing both a good question (the stem) and appropriate (and fair) answer choices. We'll also address common issues with multiple-choice exams and how instructors can use them as feedback to evaluate their own instructional effectiveness.