

SOC6811: Seminar in Teaching

Winter 2021

Instructor

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Class Meetings

Thursdays

3:00-5:00 p.m.

Zoom link is posted on Quercus.

Course Overview

Becoming effective teachers of sociology is both an art and a science. It requires us to combine evidence-based practices, pedagogical theory, reflective work, and creativity as we establish our personal teaching philosophies and bring them to life in the classroom. This seminar is designed to help you through this process, whether you already have experience teaching or have never stood in front of a classroom before. We will come together collaboratively as a learning community to discuss, debate, and share feedback.

The seminar covers four primary areas: 1) pedagogical theory, with an emphasis on critical pedagogies, 2) course design, 3) student engagement, and 4) articulating your teaching philosophy and experiences to others. Those who successfully complete the course will have engaged in (virtual) classroom observations, developed a course syllabus with at least one accompanying sample assignment, received feedback on a teaching demonstration, and prepared a teaching dossier including a statement of teaching philosophy.

This course will be offered online only due to the pandemic.

Required Texts

All readings for the course will be available online and posted on Quercus.

Virtual Learning

Our meetings will be held via Zoom and the link can be found on our Quercus site. I will never require you to turn your webcams on, but I do encourage you to do so when possible. It helps us to get to know each other and build community. And, for those of us on the other side, it gets lonely to see a sea of black boxes! If you're not able to use your camera, please consider uploading a profile photo of yourself.

Individual Consultations

I am happy to set up individual meetings with you to discuss your work or teaching in general. Because of varying schedules and time zones, I'm not planning to designate a specific office hour – but, please, just ask and we can make an appointment to chat.

Course Schedule

Week	Subject	
January 14	Introductions and Overview	Thinking about teaching exemplars and setting goals for the semester
January 21	Philosophies & Identities	Who are we (or who are we going to be) as teachers? What values and pedagogies shape our practices? Why is identifying these factors crucial to our teaching and our professional development?
January 28	Supporting our Students	How do our relationships with students shape their learning? What ethical and power issues do we need to consider? How do we support student well-being, including ensuring equity in all of its forms? Why is trauma-informed teaching important especially during a pandemic? Due: Teaching philosophy draft
February 4	The Science of Learning	What evidence-based knowledge exists about the ways that people learn? How can we translate this knowledge into our teaching practices? How can sharing this knowledge with our students enhance their learning?
February 11	Structuring a Course	How do we move from setting course goals to establishing concrete expectations, setting schedules, and choosing instructional materials? How does our teaching context shape our choices? Due: Brief course description
February 18	Reading Week	No Class
February 25	Instructional Techniques	How do we choose techniques that are a good match for our courses? How do our teaching contexts impact our choices? How can we use technology to support student learning? Due: Report on teaching observation
March 4	Assessments	How do we choose assessments that match our course goals and contexts? What are best practices for marking and providing feedback? How do we address issues of academic integrity?

Week	Subject	
March 11	Writing & Critical Thinking	What are particular strategies for teaching writing and critical thinking, particularly in the discipline of sociology? Why does it matter? Due: Annotated assessment
March 25	Challenges & Heartbreaks	How do we manage the inevitable challenges and heartbreaks that we will face – including microaggressions, difficult students, poor (and/or unfair) teaching evaluations, classroom management issues, and making difficult decisions.
April 1	Teaching in Academia	What does the academic teaching landscape look like? How can you ensure your continued professional development? How can you participate in the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning? Due: Recorded teaching demonstration
April 8	Discussion of Teaching Demonstrations and Course Wrap Up	Due: Annotated Course Outline
End of term (Date TBA)		Due: Teaching dossier/portfolio

Assignment Schedule

Due	Assignment
January 28	Teaching philosophy draft
February 11	Brief description of the course you intend to develop
February 25	Report on teaching observation
March 11	Annotated sample assignment
March 25	Annotated course outline
April 1	Recorded teaching demonstration
April 8	Annotated course outline
End of term	Teaching dossier/portfolio

CR/NC

This course is offered solely as CR/NC. In order to earn credit for the course, you must regularly attend and participate in our weekly meetings and complete all of the assignments. I will record our sessions for those who are in time zones that make it difficult to attend and for those who may have to miss a session due to illness or other personal circumstances. If you will not be able to attend regularly in real-time, speak to me about setting up an alternative for participating in class discussions.

Weekly Class Meeting

At our initial gathering, I will ask you for some input about the format of our weekly meetings in order to make them as helpful as possible for you. I will typically present some brief thoughts, followed by discussions of the readings. I will save time at the end of each class meeting for an “Ask Me Anything” session where you can bring up any questions specific to teaching that interest you or that you may be facing in the moment.

Assignments

Details and resources for completing the assignments will be posted on Quercus.

Extensions

Life sometimes throws unexpected curve balls, especially in the midst of a pandemic. If you need an extension, just communicate with me and I will try to be as flexible as possible.

Learning, Discomfort, and Trauma

By its nature, learning is often uncomfortable. We will sometimes cover controversial topics. We will disagree sometimes. We will have emotions. That's all okay. I ask you to join me in creating a space where we do so respectfully without attacking or insulting individuals.

I also ask you to approach our class as a space for curiosity and inquiry. It can be easy to slip into the role of critic, pointing out all of the flaws in an argument or method to the exclusion of any possible merits. Try to approach the readings and discussions with an eye toward understanding where ideas are coming from and what possible strengths are, in addition to your critiques.

Some of you may be recovering from traumas and find certain material triggering beyond the typical discomfort associated with learning. I try to announce when content might include such triggers, but I'm imperfect and I can't predict all of them. Feel free to step away from sessions if necessary or speak to me if you have any concerns. If you are experiencing trauma currently, please take advantage of the resources available through U of T or in the wider community. At U of T, you can access resources for graduate students here:

<https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/resources-supports/graduate-wellness-services-at-sgs/>

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.

Accessibility

Diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the accessibility office (<https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/resources-supports/resources-support-accessibility/>) as soon as possible.

Code of Student Conduct

Offenses under the Code of Student Conduct include: Sexual assault, or threats of sexual assault; Assault, threats of assault or bodily harm; Creating a condition which unnecessarily endangers the health or safety of other persons; Damage or threats of damage to personal property; Unauthorized entry or presence; Unauthorized use of University facilities, equipment or services; Bringing a false Code charge against another student; Aiding in the commission of an offence; Refusal to comply with sanctions; Unauthorized possession or use of firearms or ammunition; Stalking; Discriminatory harassment; and disturbances that obstruct an activity organized by the University or by any of its divisions, or the right of other members of the University to carry on their legitimate activities, to speak or to associate with others.

Religious Accommodations

The University provides reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences, and instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities at these times. If you anticipate a conflict due to a religious observance, please let me know as early in the course as possible, and with sufficient notice (at least two to three weeks), so that we can work together to make alternate arrangements.