

## **Chapter Two**

### **Training for New GSIs: Programs, Orientations and Courses**

Some of the goals for departmental programs conducted before classes begin are to help new GSIs' teaching skills, such as developing their confidence and knowing what to do on the first day of class. New GSIs also need to have information about the department, teaching policies, and concrete information about the course they will teach. This chapter contains checklists of information and explanations of programs that will help new GSIs succeed in teaching, as well as actual examples of programs used across the University.

Based on evaluations of CRLT orientations for new GSIs and on our conversations with experienced GSIs in focus groups, we know that new graduate student instructors tend to be anxious about meeting their class for the first time. They are, therefore, interested primarily in practical information that will help them navigate through the first few days of class and get off to a good start in their first semester of teaching. There are two types of support that can help GSIs as they begin teaching: information about departmental policies, expectations and resources; and orientations designed to help them develop classroom-teaching skills. This chapter focuses on the structure of GSI Orientations and new GSI training programs as a whole, while Chapter Three offers examples of smaller workshops that might fit into these programs.

#### **Information and Resources for New GSIs**

Well before the teaching appointment starts, departments can communicate the benefits and responsibilities of a GSI position through a well-crafted offer letter. This letter establishes the appointment fraction, stipend, and percentage tuition waiver, as well as required training. Figure 2.1 illustrates the College of LS&A's sample GSI offer letter template.

**Figure 2.1: Sample GSI Offer Letter Template, College of Literature, Sciences & the Arts, University of Michigan**

(See next two pages.)

## **GSI OFFER of EMPLOYMENT LETTER**

This is a sample letter template. Adding text from the box on the right allows you to customize your letter. Otherwise, the text contained in the body of this sample should appear in your offer letter.

To: [name of potential GSI]  
 From: [authorized agent in hiring unit]  
 Date:  
 Subject: GSI appointment

I am pleased to inform you that the <<Department of \_\_\_\_\_, Program in \_\_\_\_\_>> is able to offer you a graduate student instructorship for the \_\_\_\_\_ Term, 20\_\_\_\_. The beginning date for this appointment will be \_\_\_\_\_, and ending date will be \_\_\_\_\_. Your appointment fraction will be \_\_\_\_\_%. This fraction will provide you with a stipend of \$<<x,xxx>> and a <<xx%>> tuition waiver.

Your appointment will be in <<course>>. The specific duties are summarized in the appended fraction calculation form. <<I, we, the dept.>> must reserve the right to shift your appointment into a different course or responsibility (with equivalent workload) should unanticipated shifts in enrollments require it. It is possible that increases in course enrollments will enable us to offer you a larger appointment fraction (which, however, you would not be required to accept should you not wish the larger time commitment).

This position is conditional and contingent upon the following:

*[In the case of Fall or Winter Term appointments the following applies]:*  
 Registration for at least 6 credit hours of graduate course work during the term of employment.

Attendance at 20 hours of <pedagogy> classes offered by <the Department, LS&A, CRLT, other> on <date>. This training is mandatory.

*[In cases of .25 appointment fractions or greater the following applies]:*  
 Under the terms of this appointment, you are eligible to participate in the University Benefits Program. If you are not currently enrolled for benefits, please contact the Benefits Office (G405 Wolverine Tower); Newly hired eligible Employees as of January 1, 2006 who do not elect to enroll or who do not waive health insurance in a health insurance plan when eligible within thirty (30) days will be enrolled in the GradCare health insurance plan at the Tier I Level (one adult). Please visit the Benefits website for more information: <http://www.umich.edu/~benefits/jobgroups/grads.htm>

You will also receive regular library privileges.

As a Graduate Student Instructor or Graduate Student Staff Assistant, your employment is covered under a contract negotiated between the University of Michigan and the Graduate Employees Organization (G.E.O.). Please familiarize yourself with the contract's provisions. The following text from Article IX of the contract discusses your participation in the Union:

"If you are currently employed as a Graduate Student Instructor or Graduate Student Staff Assistant, your salary, tuition waiver, benefits, working conditions, and other terms of employment are governed by a Union contract negotiated between the University administration and the Graduate Employees Organization (G.E.O.). The contract negotiated by the GEO and the University requires that all Employees receiving benefits from this contract pay either Union Dues or a Representation Service Fee. If you have not already filled out and returned a yellow Union Dues or a Representation-Service Fee card, you are responsible for doing so. The cards are available from your department steward, your

### **OPTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- The Department's verification that you have not had and do not have other appointments during the term of employment besides those that have been indicated on your application form.
- The Department's verification that you will not exceed ten terms of support as defined under LSA's policy.
- All students must have acceptable language skills as determined by the College of LSA.
- Satisfactory documentary evidence of work eligibility in the U.S.
- Satisfactory employment performance.
- Satisfactory progress toward degree.
- Continued satisfactory performance in your academic program.
- Continued conduct consistent with the goals and mission of the University of Michigan.

Continued....

department office, the Office of Academic Human Resources, or the

GEO (734-995-0221). If you chose not to authorize the deduction of Union Dues or Representation-Service Fees from your paycheck, you must remit a check to the GEO, 527 E. Liberty St, Suite 204, Ann Arbor, MI, 48104 for payment found in the chart accompanying the "Graduate Employees' Organization Union Membership/Representation-Service Fee Card" or available at [www.umgeo.org](http://www.umgeo.org). If you do not do so, you will not be eligible for reemployment at the University of Michigan. Union members can participate in all levels of Union decision-making processes; non-members cannot."

If you are not a U.S. citizen, this offer is further contingent upon your being eligible for employment in the United States at the time of your start date. In addition, your continued employment with the University is contingent on your maintaining a valid immigration status. Although our International Center can provide advice and some assistance, you will nonetheless be responsible for your own immigration paperwork and the timely initiation of the process.

Please indicate whether you accept this offer by signing the fraction calculation form and this letter in the spaces provided, and returning both to me by the due date of <<date>>. Failure to return the letter by this date constitutes rejection of this offer.

It often happens in the course of time that because other opportunities for support have come available or because of other changes in plans, students find that they will not be available for GSI positions. Should you make such a change in plans, you must notify this office immediately, in order to be released from this agreement. Failure to do so will jeopardize your eligibility for any future positions in this Department. If you have any questions about this appointment, please see <<name>> at <<phone number or email>>.

I accept this offer:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, Date

I do not accept this offer:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, Date

#### Check list

Fraction Calculation Form

Benefits info, other forms you need them to receive, etc.

Sample template last updated: 5/07

- In the case of new GSI appointments, registration and attendance in <Dept. name> 993 and GSI orientation.
- Students with a GPA of below <GPA> are ineligible to be GSIs.
- All GSIs must be in Ann Arbor on the first day and last day of class and the day of the final each term.
- GSIs are required to attend all staff meetings in addition to meeting scheduled sections, lecture section, and office hours.
- Students whose latest GSI evaluation is below 3.00, or who have not taught before, are ineligible to teach during the spring or summer semesters.
- We are able to provide you with office space to meet with students, and a code for copying privileges.
- In the case of a course approved by the Sweetland Writing Center to fulfill the Upper-Level Writing Requirement: "Your appointment will be in \_\_\_\_\_ a course that fulfills the College's Upper-Level Writing Requirement."
- In the case of GSI appointments in courses that Sweetland has approved to fulfill the ULWR, "This position is conditional and contingent upon the following: GSIs teaching courses that fulfill the ULWR are required to complete SWC 993, a 14 hour, seven week Graduate Seminar on Teaching Writing in the Disciplines. If you have not completed SWC 993, please contact the Sweetland Writing Center at 734-764-0429 or [swcinfo@umich.edu](mailto:swcinfo@umich.edu) for registration information."

*Departmental Information*

Before the term begins, it also is useful for GSIs to know both what the department expects of them and what resources the department makes available to help them. This information may include departmental policies, resources (e.g., office space, copying, audiovisual equipment), and expectations for the GSI-faculty relationship. Many departments offer GSI Handbooks, in paper or on online. For example, the Physics Department utilizes a Wiki, and in some parts, GSIs can add their own ideas for the next generation of GSIs. Figure 2.2 illustrates a list of the topics covered in their Wiki and GSI training coursepack.

**Figure 2.2: Department of Physics, University of Michigan**

Physics GSI Training Coursepack	
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	Job Responsibilities of GSI's for Introductory Physics Laboratory courses ..... 5
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	D. Sample Assignments
	a. Bernoulli's Equation and Hydrodynamics Sample Lab Report
	b. AC Circuits Sample Lab Report

### *Course Specific Information*

Graduate student instructors should have enough information about the course they will be teaching and their responsibilities so that they know what is expected of them and they can answer students' questions about the course. Some departments have one or two sessions in the orientation devoted to course-specific information. Such sessions also offer GSIs the chance to use the materials of the course in practice teaching workshops and discussions. Some of the topics that should be given in writing and discussed with the GSIs before classes begin are listed below:

#### **Checklist of Course-Specific Information Needed by New GSIs**

##### Course Goals

- \_\_\_\_\_ How the course fits in with other courses in the department
- \_\_\_\_\_ The level and range of abilities of the students who typically take the course (What is their preparation for the course? What are their expectations?)
- \_\_\_\_\_ What the students are expected to learn in the course (final exams from former semesters can give GSIs a good sense of this)
- \_\_\_\_\_ How the GSI's section is supposed to help students achieve course goals and how it may complement lectures toward this aim
- \_\_\_\_\_ The instructor's general plan and outline for each of his or her class meetings, as well as the flexibility that GSIs have in planning their own sessions

##### Assignments and Grading

- \_\_\_\_\_ A breakdown of how students' grades will be calculated
- \_\_\_\_\_ Course requirements and policies regarding grading and deadlines for work
- \_\_\_\_\_ How much the assignments GSIs give in their sections contribute to the students' course grade
- \_\_\_\_\_ The kinds of assignments the GSIs will be responsible for creating and/or evaluating
- \_\_\_\_\_ Deadlines for tests and assignments
- \_\_\_\_\_ Deadline for dropping the course

##### Course Policies

- \_\_\_\_\_ A clear description of the delineation of decision making power between GSIs and faculty
- \_\_\_\_\_ How to handle drop/adds, absences, late or make-up assignments, requests for extra credit
- \_\_\_\_\_ Policies regarding cheating/plagiarism

### University, School, College, or Department Policies

- \_\_\_\_\_ How to deal with requests for accommodations related to religious observances (see [http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P9\\_3.html](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P9_3.html)), students with disabilities (<http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/faculty.handbook.html>), and student athletes (see school or college policies, such as the College of LS&A's at (<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/lsa/detail/0,2034,6235%255Farticle%255F31921,00.html>))
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ways to prevent and handle cheating/plagiarism (see <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/faculty/honor.html> for links to policies)
- \_\_\_\_\_ The University policy on faculty-student relationships (<http://www.provost.umich.edu/faculty/handbook/8/8.D.html#8.D.12>)
- \_\_\_\_\_ The University policies on discrimination based on sexual orientation (<http://spg.umich.edu/section/601/>) and gender ([http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P9\\_2.html](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P9_2.html))
- \_\_\_\_\_ Federal student privacy laws (i.e., FERPA) and how to hand back student work so as not to violate them
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use of departmental resources (e.g., copiers, supplies)
- \_\_\_\_\_ GSI training requirements and performance expectations

### Materials GSIs Should Receive

- \_\_\_\_\_ A course syllabus
- \_\_\_\_\_ Directions for using Wolverine Access to obtain class rosters and student photos (i.e., “photo class roster”) (<https://wolverineaccess.umich.edu>)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Textbooks and readings for the course
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedules of required orientations and workshops during the semester
- \_\_\_\_\_ Directions for using the course management system or course website
- \_\_\_\_\_ A CRLT *GSI Guidebook*, which includes university policies and a list of resources that can be used for various problems that may be encountered in class (academic, emotional, etc.) To order *GSI Guidebooks*, please contact CRLT at 734-764-0505 or [crlt@umich.edu](mailto:crlt@umich.edu).

## Orientations and Workshops for New GSIs

The 2002 *Provost's Task Force on Testing and Training Prospective GSIs* established a university-wide training requirement of at least four hours of pedagogical development for new GSIs. However, some schools and colleges require additional training, such as the College of LS&A, which specifies twenty hours. To fulfill these training requirements and enhance GSI instruction, UM departments utilize a variety of orientation workshop formats, sometimes in combination. Three of the most common are described here:

- CRLT Orientations, offered two times a year
- Departmental Orientations & Workshops, often offered before classes start
- Departmental Courses, offered throughout the term

### *CRLT Orientations*

CRLT offers two centralized orientations that are open to all GSIs, but focus particularly on the knowledge and skills that new GSIs will need to enter the U-M classroom. Agendas for the Engineering GSI Orientation and the university-wide (for all other schools and colleges) GSI Orientation are provided in Figure 2.3. Both orientations are offered two times a year. For more information or to register, please see <http://www.crlt.umich.edu>.

### **Figure 2.3: Center for Research on Learning, University of Michigan**

#### *Agenda for Fall GSI Teaching Orientation*

#### **DAY ONE (The Monday before classes start in the Fall Term)**

Orientation begins in the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, at the north end of the Michigan League. At 3:30 p.m., sessions move to the south end of the Michigan League. For directions, see <http://www.umich.edu/~league/maps/directions.htm>.

1:00 – 1:30 p.m.	Welcome & Introductions (Mendelssohn Theatre)
1:30 – 1:45	U–M Policies; Overview of Orientation Agenda
1:45 – 2:00	Break
2:00 – 3:15	Interactive Theatre: <i>The First Day</i>
3:15 – 3:30	Break
3:30 – 5:00	Concurrent Break-out Sessions on the First Days of Teaching (Michigan League) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Getting Started: GSIs Teaching Graduate Students</i></li> <li>• <i>Getting Started: GSIs Teaching Undergraduates</i></li> </ul>

**DAY TWO (The Tuesday before classes start in the Fall Term)**

*Breakfast begins in the Michigan League Concourse at 8:30 a.m. The orientation program begins at 9:10 a.m., in the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, at the north end of the Michigan League. At 10:00 a.m., sessions move to the Ballroom at the south end of the League.*

8:30 – 9:00 a.m.	Light Breakfast (Michigan League Concourse)
9:00 – 9:10	Move to Mendelssohn Theatre
9:10 – 9:20	Reflections on Teaching
9:20 – 10:00	Classroom Communication at U–M (Mendelssohn Theatre)
10:00 – 10:15	Break
10:15 – 12:15 p.m.	Practice Teaching Workshops (Michigan League Ballroom)
12:15 – 1:05	Lunch & GEO presentation
1:15 – 2:45	Concurrent Sessions I on Pedagogy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Leading Discussions in the Social Sciences</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading Discussions in Psychology</i></li> <li>• <i>Dealing with Controversy During Classroom Discussion</i></li> <li>• <i>Evaluating Student Writing</i></li> <li>• <i>Facilitating Group Work to Maximize Learning in Labs, Discussions, and Teams</i></li> <li>• <i>Teaching Problem Solving</i></li> <li>• <i>Teaching Strategies for Foreign Language Courses</i></li> <li>• <i>One-to-One Teaching in Music, Art, Dance &amp; Architecture (cont. at Concurrent II)</i></li> </ul>
2:45 – 3:00	Break
3:00 – 4:30	Concurrent Sessions II on Pedagogy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Leading Discussions in the Humanities</i></li> <li>• <i>Dealing with Controversy During Classroom Discussion</i></li> <li>• <i>Evaluating Student Writing</i></li> <li>• <i>Grading in Quantitative Courses and the Sciences</i></li> <li>• <i>Teaching Problem Solving</i></li> <li>• <i>One-to-One Teaching in Music, Art, Dance &amp; Architecture (continued from Concurrent I)</i></li> <li>• <i>Multicultural Dynamics in the Classroom</i></li> </ul>

**If you need any accommodations or have any questions, please contact CRLT ([crlt@umich.edu](mailto:crlt@umich.edu)).**

**Engineering GSI Teacher Training – Agenda**

8:30 am – 3:30 pm

8:30—8:45	Registration and breakfast	Atrium at FXB
8:45—9:00	Welcome Remarks	Boeing Auditorium, Room 1109 FXB
Overview of Engineering GSI Teacher Training		
9:00—9:55	Concurrent Session A	
Preparing for Section ..... Room 1012 FXB Handling Office Hours..... Room 1024 FXB Grading Issues ..... Room 1032 FXB		
10:00—11:40	Plenary Session	Boeing Auditorium, Room 1109 FXB
CRLT Players: Gender Dynamics in the Classroom Information about Practice Teaching Welcome from the College		
11:40—12:10	Lunch and time to prepare for practice teaching	Atrium at FXB
12:10—1:05	Concurrent Session B	
Active Learning in Lectures & Lab ..... Room 1012 FXB Teaching Problem Solving Skills ..... Room 1024 FXB Classroom Strategies to Reach All Students..... Room 1032 FXB		
1:10—1:30	GEO: Employee Rights and Responsibilities	Boeing Auditorium, Room 1109 FXB
1:30—1:40	Break and travel time	
1:40—3:30	Practice Teaching Sessions	North Campus
<b>Practice teaching sessions will be in various rooms on North Campus. You should report promptly at 1:40p.m. to the room for which you registered during breakfast. Please record that room here:</b>  _____		
<b>Active Learning Videotaped Practice Teaching Sessions</b>		<b>Chrysler Auditorium</b>
<b>Please register for one of four available videotaped practice teaching sessions listed below (mark the box as a reminder). Report promptly to Chrysler Auditorium at the start of your session. Dinner will be served between the afternoon and evening sessions (time is included in the schedule for dinner).</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Session 1. Wednesday afternoon, 2:45p.m.—5:15 p.m.</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Session 2. Wednesday evening, 5:00p.m.—7:30 pm.</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Session 3. Thursday afternoon, 2:45p.m.—5:15 p.m.</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Session 4. Thursday evening, 5:00p.m.—7:30 pm.</b>		

### *Departmental Orientations and Workshops*

In CRLT's work with departments and conversations with experienced GSIs, we have learned that new GSIs find pre-semester workshops and activities useful when they directly address strategies for the first days of teaching or concerns and anxieties of first-time teachers. While specific workshops will vary depending on the responsibilities of the GSIs and the skills needed to carry out these responsibilities, we suggest that the bulk of the workshops conducted before classes begin focus on topics of immediate use during the first few weeks of classes, such as:

- Advice from experienced GSIs in the department
- What to do on the first day
- Getting to know students
- Planning a class session
- Practice teaching
- Discussions of difficult classroom scenarios

Chapter Three offers several examples of workshops that can be utilized to address these topics. *Remember, wherever possible, it is important to keep GSIs actively engaged and thinking about teaching and learning. When teaching a skill in a workshop: give instruction, demonstrate, give GSIs a chance to practice, and give feedback.*

Figures 2.4 through 2.6 offer examples of different departmental orientation programs, including the Department of Economics (LS&A), Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (College of Engineering), and the Ford School of Public Policy. Each is configured in different ways, to accommodate a stand-alone departmental orientation (Economics) or interface with CRLT programs (Public Policy and EECS).

**Figure 2.4: Economics Department, University of Michigan***Economics Department GSI Training Workshop***SCHEDULE****Day One**

- 1:00 – 1:30 *Exercise 1: Teaching situation*
- 1:30 – 2:00 Introduction, *Feedback* on Exercise 1
- 2:00 – 2:30 Evaluations: What they are and why you should care about them.
- 2:30 – 2:45 Break
- 2:45 – 3:30 The Undergrads at Michigan (Janet Gerson)
- 3:30 – 4:30 *Exercise 2: First day of class*  
**Assignment 1:** Prepare a 10-minute lecture on the assigned topic. Be ready to present it at any time starting Tuesday.

**Day Two**

- 1:00 – 1:10 Introduction
- 1:10 – 2:00 Integrity issues at LS&A (Robert Walin)
- 2:00 – 3:00 Sample Teaching
- 3:00 – 3:15 Break
- 3:15 – 4:00 *Exercise 3: Particular student (Brian Kovak)*
- 4:00 – 4:30 University IT tools, writing questions, grading.

**Day Three**

- 1:00 – 1:10 Introduction
- 1:30 – 2:15 Sexual harassment and student / faculty issues (Pamela Heatlie)
- 2:00 – 2:45 *Exercise 4: Board work*
- 2:15 – 2:30 Being a female / international GSI
- 2:30 – 2:45 Break
- 2:45 – 4:15 Sample Teaching
- 4:15 – 4:30 Review Sessions  
**Assignment 2:** Prepare a 15-minute lecture for videotaping on a topic from the class you'll be teaching.

**Day Four**

- 1:00 – 4:30 Videotaping your lectures.  
**Assignment 3:** Watch your videotape and write down a one-page analysis of your teaching; strength and weaknesses, ways to improve yourself, etc.

**Day Five**

- 10:00 – 10:30 Copy room, reservation and administrative details.
- 10:30 – 11:00 GEO
- 11:00 – 11:15 Athletes, NPCs, etc.
- 11:15 – 11:30 Training evaluation
- 12:00 – 1:00 Round Table / Lunch

**Figure 2.5: Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan**

**Gerald R. Ford**  
**School of Public Policy**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) Orientation  
 Monday, August 27, 2007  
 1210 Weill Hall | 10:00 a.m.

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**Introduction**  
*Trey Williams, Director, Student & Academic Services*  
*Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy*

**Overview & University Policies:**  
**Religious Holidays, Disability Issues, & Harassment Policy**  
*Deborah Meizlish, Ph.D., Coordinator of Social Science Initiatives*  
*Center for Research on Learning and Teaching*

**Teaching International Students at the Ford School**  
*John Chamberlin, Interim Dean*  
*Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy*

**Personnel Matters & Facilities Issues**  
*Linda Kennedy and Sharon Disney, Human Resources*  
*Bill Kelly, Facilities Manager*  
*Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy*

**Break**

**Academic Resources**  
*Regina Zmich, Fellowship and Academic Advising Manager*  
*Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy*

**Evaluation**  
*Amy Thudium, School Registrar*  
*Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy*

**Graduate Student Union:**  
**Rights & Responsibilities**  
*Representative from Graduate Student Union*

**Figure 2.6: Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science,  
University of Michigan**

**EECS NEW GSI/IA ORIENTATION**

**Agenda**

3:30-3:45	Welcome and Review Agenda	Prof. Jeff Fessler, ECE Assoc Cha
3:45-4:00	Safety Issues	Brian Rice (brrice) EECS Facilities and Safety Assistant
4:00-4:05	CTools	Digital Media Commons Diana Perpich (dperpich)
4:05-4:15	Benefits Office	Chris Miller
4:15-4:30	Sexual Assault Prevention and. Awareness Ctr Education and Training - SAPAC	Charnessa Paige (charliep)
4:30-4:40	Center for Research on Learning and Teaching	Alina Chu and Mark Hodges ETCs, CRLT
4:40-5:00	GEO Overview and Q and A	Urmila Venkatesh (urmila)

**RESOURCES**

1. SAFE Walk from public safety for late lab and office hours  
(<http://www.umich.edu/~safety/safewalk.html>)
2. Services for students with disabilities (<http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/>)
3. Religious holidays and associated policies  
([http://www.provost.umich.edu/calendar/religious\\_holidays\\_05-06.html](http://www.provost.umich.edu/calendar/religious_holidays_05-06.html))
4. Tutoring information (<http://www.eecs.umich.edu/eecs/undergraduate/tutoring.html>)
5. CoE Info page – (<http://www.engin.umich.edu/students/current/graduate/gsi.html>)
6. Benefits office – (<http://www.umich.edu/~benefits>)

*Departmental Courses*

As a complement to their initial training program, many departments offer for-credit courses for their GSIs, which provide support through the entire first term of teaching. Figure 2.7 shows a sample syllabus for a course offered by the English Department, which is required for GSIs teaching discussion sections for the first time. Like the course presented here, these classes often require a classroom observation or midterm student feedback.

**Figure 2.7: Anne Curzan, Department of English Language and Literature,  
University of Michigan**

## The Practice of Pedagogy

English 695, Fall 2003

Tuesday 6:00-8:30, 2469 Mason Hall

Professor Anne Curzan

Office: 3124 Angell Hall

Office phone: 764-6379

Office hours: Tuesday 3:00 – 5:00 and Wednesday 2:30 - 4:00 (and by appointment)

E-mail: [acurzan@umich.edu](mailto:acurzan@umich.edu) (I check my mail daily, Monday through Friday)

Course web site: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~acurzan/eng695.htm>

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to provide guidance, support, and advice as you begin your teaching career at the University of Michigan—a challenging and exciting experience that can also be nerve-racking for all but the most experienced instructors. The course aims to address both the practical questions that come with teaching and some of the broader theoretical issues involved in course design; our discussions should also help you develop a set of strategies for reflecting on your own development and practices as a teacher, now and in semesters to come. Throughout the term, the course will focus on many of the practical concerns of being a graduate student instructor: facilitating discussion, grading, negotiating your relationship with students and with professors, controlling your time, etc. These discussions will be complemented by selected readings from some of the thoughtful published material on teaching, often specifically within an English department. The second half of the course will turn more to issues of course goals and syllabus design (including specific writing assignments) to help you prepare for teaching 124 the following year. In addition, I will make visits to all of your classrooms so that I can give you specific feedback on your own strengths and weaknesses as well as the kinds of student interactions I can observe within the context of your class. One key to good teaching is collaboration, and in this course we will work together to talk through pedagogical questions and concerns, including how to apply pedagogical theory. Our weekly meetings as a community of professional teachers will be a forum where you can share teaching worries and successes, learn from each other's experiences, and develop pedagogical strategies and skills that will guide you throughout your teaching career.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

- Curzan, Anne, and Lisa Damour. 2000. *First Day to Final Grade: A Graduate Student's Guide to Teaching*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. (available at Shaman Drum, 311 South State)
- Two coursepacks, available at Accu-copy, 518 East William Street

### COURSE GOALS

The content of this course will challenge you to continue to develop your sense of yourself as a teacher and to reflect on your pedagogical strategies in relation to selected pedagogical theory. As we read, write about, and discuss this material, we should bear in mind some of the critical goals for the course:

- To expand your sense of the pedagogical theory behind our pedagogical practices;
- To address the practical concerns that all teachers confront in designing and implementing a course, including those specific to being a graduate student instructor;
- To continue to develop your skills as a self-reflective teacher;
- To develop a self-reflective and supportive community of teachers within our corner of the academic world;
- To create a preliminary course design and syllabus for English 124.

## WORK COMMITMENTS

### I. WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS FOCUSED ON THE PRACTICE OF PEDAGOGY

For almost every week of the term, you will be asked to prepare materials that will then serve as the basis for part of our discussion that week. For the most part, these will be sample course materials. In order for me to comment on and return these materials to you by our class meeting on Tuesday evening, the materials are due each week in my box by 1 PM on Monday of that week. If the material is not in my box by Monday at 1:00, it will be counted as a failure to do the assignment. For most of these assignments, you will receive a handout on the Tuesday before with more details. I would like to be able to make copies of selected materials throughout the term, which we can talk about as a class. If you would like a particular assignment to remain anonymous, please attach a note to the assignment itself.

### II. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ONE ARTICLE

On your own or in pairs, each of you will write a set of discussion questions/points (or some other variation of a discussion-starter) for one of the articles we read together during the term. I will ask you to email this material to me by Monday afternoon, so that I can respond to your questions and integrate the discussion into my lesson plan. I will ask you then to start the discussion of the article in the seminar meeting based on your questions. I hope that this process will accomplish two things: (1) provide me another opportunity to respond to you individually about creating discussion questions; (2) ensure that we discuss issues in the readings that are of interest to you.

### III. DESCRIPTIVE OBSERVATION OF ENGLISH 124/125

During the course of the semester, you will arrange to observe one class meeting of English 124 or 125, and you will write up a descriptive observation of the class. The goal of this assignment is both to give you the opportunity to watch English 124/125 “in practice,” and to give you practice observing a class and writing a class observation. These written observations will be primarily descriptive rather than evaluative. We will go over the methodology of writing up class observations together as well as how to arrange to visit a class.

### IV. PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS FOR ENGLISH 124

At the end of the term, you will turn in a preliminary syllabus for English 124 along with a rationale for the structure of the course, including readings and the assignment sequence. You will receive more details about writing up the rationale later in the semester.

### V. PARTICIPATION

As in any graduate seminar, you are expected to come to every class meeting prepared, having read and thought critically about the assigned texts. Lively conversation about this work is the joy of a seminar, and it works only if everyone is ready to participate.

## VI. CLASSROOM VISIT:

A critical component of this course is classroom visits. I will be making these visits to your classrooms throughout the term—I will speak with each of you individually to set up a time. I also encourage you to visit each other's classes. You can learn an enormous amount from watching others teach and from talking with each other about what happens in the classroom. Visiting classes is an important part of establishing a vibrant and collaborative teaching community.

A NOTE ON PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is the act of presenting other people's work or ideas as your own. If you are caught plagiarizing, the English Department's usual policy prescribes that you will fail the assignment and potentially the course, your case may be sent to the Dean of Student Affairs, and you may be placed on academic probation. Please read the English Department's web page on plagiarism carefully: <<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/plag.htm>>. If you have any questions about how to reference material or about what constitutes plagiarism, please come see me.

## FEEDBACK

I am very interested in hearing from you throughout the quarter about the course, about the material we are reading, and about your classes. Please let me know—by email, in person, or by leaving a note in my box—if there are issues you would like to be sure that we discuss as a class, if an issue comes up in the reading that needs clarification, etc. And please always feel free to be in touch if you want to talk about what is happening, has happened, or will be happening in your own classroom.

## TIME PROTOCOL

All of our time is valuable and, as we all know, none of us ever has enough. I will expect you to come to class on time—to be here by 6:10 ready to begin class. In return, I promise to do my best to end class on time; I know that you have many other commitments. I also expect you to turn your work in on time, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

】 Please turn off all cell phones and beepers for the duration of the class meeting.

## DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES

If you have a documented disability that requires special accommodations, please contact me at the beginning of the semester so that the proper arrangements can be made.

## Syllabus

WEEK 1:	INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE AND TALKING ABOUT PEDAGOGY
Sept. 2	<p>Introductions</p> <p><u>Topics on the Table:</u> Importance of beginnings; goals for the first day; role/place of pedagogy in academia; campus resources</p> <p><u>Read for class:</u> <i>First Day</i> Chapters 1 &amp; 2</p>
WEEK 2:	SETTING GOALS
Sept. 9	<p>Class Goals and Course Goals</p> <p><u>Topics on the Table:</u> lesson plans; appropriate and achievable class and course goals; in-class strategies for achieving these goals</p> <p><u>Read for class:</u> Gregory (“Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Teacherly Ethos”); Graff (“The Problem Problem”); <i>First Day</i> Chap. 3</p> <p><u>Due on Mon.:</u> Sample lesson plan with class goals listed at the top</p>
WEEK 3:	CLASS DISCUSSION
Sept. 16	<p>Running Discussion and Talking about Texts</p> <p><u>Topics on the Table:</u> role of questions in a discussion; role of the instructor as a facilitator; use of “mini-lectures”; role of the text in classroom discussion; reasons for reading in a composition classroom</p> <p><u>Read for class:</u> Morrow (“The Role of Reading”); <i>First Day</i> Chap. 4</p> <p><u>Due on Mon.:</u> Sample discussion questions/class plans for either: Amy Tan’s “Mother Tongue” or Elizabeth Bishop’s “One Art”</p>
WEEK 4:	WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
Sept. 23	<p>Creating Assignments</p> <p><u>Topics on the Table:</u> designing writing assignments; logistics of drafts and revision; timetables</p> <p><u>Read for class:</u> Emig (“Writing as a Mode of Learning”); Fischer (“Wingdams”)</p> <p><u>Due on Mon.:</u> Two sample-writing assignments (one short and one long)</p>
WKS 5 & 6:	COMMENTING ON AND GRADING STUDENT WORK
Sept. 30	<p>Responding to Student Work</p> <p><u>Topics on the Table:</u> grading papers; evaluation criteria</p> <p><u>Read for class:</u> Walvoord and Anderson (“Establishing Criteria”); Elbow (“Ranking, Evaluating, and Liking”)</p> <p><u>Due on Mon.:</u> Comments on two student papers (in file drawer); draft of your grading criteria</p>
Oct. 7	<p>Responding to Student Work II</p> <p><u>Topics on the Table:</u> grading papers, particularly less formal or shorter assignments; grading participation and presentations</p> <p><u>Read for class:</u> Smith (“The Genre of the End Comment”)</p> <p><u>Due on Mon.:</u> One paper that you have graded (name removed); ideas about and protocols for grading participation</p>
WEEK 7:	HOLIDAY (Oct. 14)
WEEK 8:	EVALUATION

Oct. 21	Exams and Evaluation <u>Topics on the Table</u> : role of exams; how to write an exam; role of evaluation; mid-term and final evaluations <u>Due on Mon.</u> : Sample mid-term evaluation; one section of an exam
WEEK 8:	TEACHING DYNAMICS
Oct. 28	Diversity in the Classroom <u>Topics on the Table</u> : diversity in the classroom; teaching “English”; negotiating diverse rhetorical styles <u>Read for class</u> : Lippi-Green (“Introduction” and “Chapter 1”), Delpit (“The Silenced Dialogue”), Elbow (“Vernacular Englishes”)
WEEK 9:	COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
Nov. 4	Course descriptions and defining academic “work” <u>Topics on the Table</u> : goals of course descriptions; writing a course description; balancing one’s “work”: research/classes and teaching <u>Read for class</u> : Levine (“The Two Nations”) <u>Due on Mon.</u> : Two course descriptions
WEEK 10:	ENGLISH 124 AND 125
Nov. 11	English 124 and 125 <u>Topics on the Table</u> : goals of 124 and 125; typical structure of these courses; teaching writing; teaching grammar <u>Read for class</u> : WPA Outcomes Statement <u>Due on Mon.</u> : Revisions/additions to create a 124 Outcomes Statement
WEEK 11:	ENGLISH 124 AND 125 (CONT.)
Nov. 18	First-hand Knowledge of English 124 and 125 <u>Guest Speakers</u> : Current and former GSIs from 124 and 125
WEEK 12:	SYLLABI
Nov. 25	Constructing a Syllabus <u>Topics on the Table</u> : constructing a syllabus in general; constructing a syllabus for English 124/125 <u>Due by Mon.</u> : Descriptive Observation of English 124/125
WEEK 13:	TEACHING WRITING AND GRAMMAR
Dec. 2	The Mechanics of Teaching Writing and Grammar <u>Topics on the Table</u> : what it means to “teach writing”; grammar anxieties
WEEK 14:	BUILDING A TEACHING CAREER
Dec. 9	Looking Ahead <u>Topics on the Table</u> : teaching portfolios; concerns about English 124/125; ongoing resources and support for teaching <u>Due by Mon.</u> : Preliminary Syllabus for English 124 and Rationale

### ***Evaluation of the GSI Training Program***

In order to continually enhance the orientation and training program, departments should construct an evaluation plan. Elements of this plan should include:

- *How and when data are to be gathered*

It is best to collect data over multiple points in time, so as to best understand the usefulness of the program before, during and after the teaching experience.

Figure 2.8 offers an example of an evaluation for GSIs to complete at the end of an orientation. Other possible means of evaluation include group observations or midterm student feedbacks (see Chapter Seven) to determine GSIs' collective strengths and weaknesses as teachers, E&E evaluations for GSI training courses, and focus groups.

- *How to use the data to make changes to the training program*

A common error in evaluation is to collect piles of data, which sit unutilized.

Once data have been collected, they should be interpreted to understand what programmatic modifications need to be made.

**Figure 2.8: French Program, Department of Romance Languages  
and Literatures, University of Michigan**

**EVALUATION OF FALL 2006 ORIENTATION PROGRAM FOR INSTRUCTORS IN FRENCH**

Your opinions regarding the usefulness to you of the orientation workshop (August 28-September 1) are valuable to the faculty and staff involved in organizing the workshop and in presenting or leading individual sessions. It is with your feedback that improvement can be put into effect for next year.

A. Rate the following on a scale of 5-1 (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). Feel free to add comments.

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Overall, the workshop prepared me for the first week or so of teaching              | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I learned a great deal about teaching from the workshop                             | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. The workshop was relevant to my teaching needs                                      | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. The workshop helped me have more confidence in meeting my class for the first time. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. The workshop made good use of my time.  | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

B. Please identify and comment on the following. *(Use the back of this page for any additional comments)*

1. topics/sessions that were the most useful for you
  
2. topics/sessions that were the least useful for you
  
3. topics/sessions that you think need to be shortened or streamlined
  
4. topics/sessions where more information, discussion, or time was needed
  
5. topics/sessions that could have been eliminated from the workshop (possibly addressed in some other manner or at another time? or dropped altogether?)
  
6. other teaching-related issues (topics, techniques, skills) that should be included in future workshops

**Please return evaluations to Helene Neu by Monday, September 11.**