

Teaching Commons News For Grad Students

Lessons inspired from the Classroom



While the end of the Winter term is in sight, for many new ideas are blooming. Spring and summer offer a wonderful opportunity to step back and reflect on your academic year and your teaching. Think about all that you have accomplished. What lessons have you learned? What have you learned about yourself as a pedagogue? What new lessons have your students taught you? How might these new insights motivate you as you head into April and May?

Register Today for the STAY Symposium

Join us for the Teaching Commons 5th Annual Supporting Teaching At York, STAY, Symposium. This day, as always, promises to be jam-packed full of practical tips for TAs of all levels of experience. We take an interdisciplinary approach to the development and delivery of each session and offer active, hands-on sessions to maximize learning for each participant. Lead by our Senior Teaching Assistants, this Symposium offers Teaching Assistants at York a wonderful opportunity for professional development and to enhance your teaching.

Date: Friday May 5th, 2017, 9:30am-3:30pm

Location: Life Sciences Building, Room 103

[Register for the STAY Symposium at York](#)



Upcoming Workshops

Networking Workshop in the Faculty of Graduate Studies

Date: Friday April 21st, 10:00am to 12:00pm

Location: 280A York Lanes

This workshop will focus on developing graduate students' and postdoctoral fellows' networking skills. It will provide participants with information and tools to gain confidence in making professional connections with researchers, stakeholders, knowledge users and other trainees. The workshop will involve networking exercises, information on how to use social media to increase networking potential, and practical tips that can be applied in real world settings. Participants will have the opportunity to build their network by engaging with one another and learning techniques that they can apply in their future endeavours.

This workshop is hosted in partnership with members of the Canadian Injury Prevention Trainee Network (CIPTN).

Learn How to "DO" a Teaching Dossier

Date: Thursday April 27th, 2017, from 10:00am to Noon.

Location: DB 1014

[Register for the Learn How to “DO a Teaching Dossier Workshop”](#)

Introduction to Course Design Workshop for Graduate Students

Date: Tuesday May 16th, 2017, from 9:30am to 12:30pm.

Location: DB 1014

[Register for the Introduction to Course Design Workshop for Graduate Students](#)

It is possible and it is Important

by Justeena Zaki-Azat



The “regular” school-year is nearing end... and although grad student life goes on all year round – summer is usually the more relaxing season. As I am sure many fellow grad students are, I am trying to keep it together for the home stretch. April is the month of deadlines, papers, projects, and of course lots and lots of grading. This time last year, I was contemplating quitting grad school, but I didn’t. I was determined to make Year 2 of my PhD more like a PhD 2.0 – a new and improved experience. This year was my chance to reshape my path, so let me tell you a little bit about how the past 8 months of my life turned out:

Academic: I decided to get a Quantitative Graduate Diploma offered by the Psychology Department which meant I had to take quite a few courses among other requirements. So, I am currently finishing 3 advanced statistical courses. Besides that, I have my minor area paper (or comprehensive) component of my degree in the works and of course, some sort of assembly of my committee for the dissertation to submit this month.

Extracurricular: At York, I am an executive member of the Psychology Graduate Students Association, as well as a selected student leader at the LaMarsh Centre for Child and Youth Research. My responsibilities include organizing events, talks, initiatives, and representing students at department meetings, and more. These have given me an opportunity to network and build connections with many different people within my department and across other departments as well.

Work: This year, I TA’d two combined sections of the Introduction to Psychology class with 500 students in each class. Even though I’m not teaching, as the administrative lead-TA, I have learned a lot about what it takes to run a course. Being enrolled in the [Senior Teaching Assistant](#) (STA) course with the Teaching Commons this year proved to be an invaluable experience because the workshops we ran were oriented to supporting other TAs – exactly my role this year by managing a team of 10 TAs! All this while holding weekly tutoring sessions in statistics and just waiting for those rewarding “AHA!” moments in my students’ eyes.

Community Service: Being an involved member of my Orthodox Church, I volunteer a couple of hours a week to several activities. I teach an adult Coptic Language class, for those who want to learn how to read this old Egyptian language. I teach high school youth how to prepare and deliver Sunday School lessons to younger children. As a long-time choir kid, I pay it forward by conducting a children’s choir. Finally, I organize an inter-church graduate dinner every couple of months to help engage young adults with their community.

Mental & Physical Health: Being in psychology, I know how important is to take care of my mind and body, and I do it through sports. I joined weekly competitive leagues to help me stay committed. I play Basketball on

Wednesdays, Co-ed Volleyball on Thursdays, and Soccer on Sundays. And you can bet I meet a lot of people, I have a lot of fun, and most importantly, I am staying active.

So, why have I disclosed all this personal information, and how is this at all related to teaching you ask? Well, the purpose is two-fold: first to tell you that it IS possible, and second to tell you that it's important. It is possible for us to be allocating our time to the things that are important to us, whether it be developing our career, learning something new, giving back to the community. The key to doing that is setting our priorities straight. When we have priorities, we can discern where we invest our time. Now, it is important to be involved in other activities that are not necessarily academic. I am the first to admit the worries of post-graduate life are constantly looming at my door; however, we tend to forget that there is more to life than that. Graduate school is about growing holistically and in a balanced way. This is the time to develop many different facets of our character, skills, and our interests – research or otherwise. In doing so, I truly believe we become better educators – but more importantly better humans.

Professional Development Report: Educational Developers and Graduate Students Unite!

On March 24th, Natasha May and Mandy Frake-Mistak, both Educational Developers at the Teaching Commons, attended a day long professional development day at the Centre for Teaching Support, & Innovation, University of Toronto. We were invited along with other developers and graduate students from Brock University, University of Guelph, McMaster University, Ryerson University, University of Waterloo, and Western University. Throughout the day we discussed similarities and differences across our institutions and our respective programming, challenges and dilemmas that face our students and exist across higher education. Together we shared our vision of how we would like to build on the support offered to graduate students and brainstormed new and effective ways to reach out to those who are not aware or always able to engage with the teaching and learning support centre. During lunch, Mandy Frake-Mistak, along with a colleague from McMaster, facilitated a large group discussion of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Together, we worked through a series of questions and considerations regarding how we contribute or would like to contribute to SoTL. Moreover, how graduate students may be involved in this process as well as how graduate students influence our programming. The day overall was engaging and invigorating and as always, Mandy and Natasha are committed to offering the most up-to-date and supportive environment for you to learn how to teach and support your students in your classrooms!

