

Teaching Commons News For Graduate Students

Putting Winter Behind us and Welcoming Spring



It was a long, cold winter that has finally ended. We can now look forward to flowers, sunshine and eventually summer! At the Teaching Commons, we are very conscious of the work you all have ahead of you, not to mention new challenges and also, exciting opportunities. To support you in accomplishing everything in an efficient and successful manner, as well as help you to support your own undergraduate students, we have increased our services and resources. We have also rescheduled a number of workshops that were postponed, with more still to be rescheduled. You will be happy to know that the STAY Symposium will continue as planned, thanks, in part, to our dedicated Senior Teaching Assistants. Come, STAY and celebrate with us!

Support for TAs with the Resumption of Classes

With the resumption of classes, you may be seeking support in dealing with compressed term work, time management and addressing students' concerns. The Teaching Commons has many resources to help you bring the year to a successful conclusion. We continue to offer TA drop-in hours at the TC Lounge where you may come and speak with other TAs and get support from experienced Teaching Commons Tutors in any area of your teaching. We have also included a list of Frequently Asked Questions and some suggested responses to get you started. For a complete list of resources and FAQs, please see our website:

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/#TASupport>

Frequently Asked Questions (a sample):

What should I do my first day back in the classroom?

Consult with your Course Director regarding their expectations, and review the Senate remediation documents/ Faculty level primers to ensure you are aware of all university deadlines and policies regarding class remediation. Review the remaining schedule of tutorials/labs and outstanding work (assignments, exams, etc.) and emphasize the use of the office hour to catch up. Also clearly outline any course accommodations available to students. Acknowledging the gap in instruction since the last class will help your students to move forward, and will enable you to reconnect and review where you are as a class. Be understanding and reassure your students that you are here to support them in achieving success in the course.

How do I deal with students' emotions of anger, anxiety and disappointment?

A positive class persona will do much to reassure students as they complete the semester. Be aware of students who need more direct reassurance, and offer office hours to deal with specific cases. Be neutral and non-biased, and remember that students have many responsibilities which may affect their ability to complete the term as it extends through April and May. Keep a present attitude rather than getting stuck in the past and offer additional learning strategies to overcome negative attitudes (The Teaching Commons has many resources to offer in this area, see <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/resources-2/>, particularly Accommodations and Inclusive Teaching and Teaching Strategies). Depending on the case, allow them to vent by writing out their frustrations or talking to each other. Consult your class and form a consensus on a series of ground rules (as above), so all are agreed on and aware of the path forward.

Our Teaching Commons Tutors (TCTs) are delighted to meet with you to discuss any questions or concerns you may have. So please consider dropping by the TC Lounge in TEL 1050 to have coffee with a TCT during...

TA Drop-in Hours at the TC Lounge

A number of your TA colleagues are eager to meet with you and provide support in any aspect of your teaching. Please consider registering, or just dropping by, for one, two or all of the TA drop-in hours that the TCTs are hosting in the TC Lounge located in the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Building, Room 1050.

Wednesday April 8, 2015, 2:00-4:00pm. Facilitated by Pat Breton.

To register, please visit: <http://teachingcommonsforms.apps01.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=230462>

Tuesday April 14, 2015, 12:00-2:00pm. Facilitated by Khyati Nagar.

To register, please visit: <http://teachingcommonsforms.apps01.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=242193>

Pat Breton (pictured right) has taught at York for 6 years, as a TA in predominantly 1st year foundations courses and as a course director in 3rd and 4th year social science courses. She is interested in sharing her wealth of experience with you. Here is a quick teaching tip from Pat: "...to engage diverse learners with a complex threshold concept: Ask students to work in groups and "draw their answers" on the board. In my class, the visuals help diverse learners better grasp the concept and the students often tell me they have great fun with this interactive activity."



Khyati Nagar (pictured left) is a PhD candidate in the department of Humanities in the faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies. She has been a TA at YorkU for five years now. Since August 2014, she has worked as a Teaching Commons Tutor where she helps mentor and support other junior and senior Teaching Assistants across York University. As Khyati says, "...going through the TACT and STA programs at Teaching Commons has made me a more nuanced educator such that I can reflect on my pedagogical practices quite critically. My teaching is radically student-centered and I constantly try to find new ways for engaging my students and it's their feedback that makes this possible. I have been teaching in Higher Education institutions in India and Canada for over 10 years and look forward to keep on teaching!"

A special message from Khyati:

Hi fellow TAs! Please come say hello, stop by for a chat and bring a teaching-related question or concern, if you have one. Do you have any ideas about the kind of support you'd like from Teaching Commons? Are you feeling overwhelmed with all the marking and grading? Please feel free to bring any teaching-related issues that you'd like to see addressed and I will be happy to talk with you. We can even hash a plan for better teaching practices at YorkU and more departmental support. I look forward to seeing you on April 14 between 12pm and 2pm. See you soon!

Professional Development Workshops

We are committed to offer you workshops and events to provide teaching support for your TA duties, develop skills and resources that can help you in your career aspirations and to complete the requirements for the Record of Completion certificate to put on your CV! We thank you for your patience while we work with your TA colleagues (who will be facilitating most of these workshops) to reschedule the workshops. We do hope that you will be able to attend all of the workshops that interest you, but don't forget about the STAY Symposium, where you may be able to get all of the support you need in a one day event!

Rescheduled or Upcoming Workshops:

Guidelines for Exam Invigilation

Wednesday April 8, 2015, 12:30pm-1:30pm, Bethune College, Room 320

Facilitated by: Brian Nairn, Senior Teaching Assistant in Kinesiology and Health Science

To register, please visit <http://teachingcommonsforms.apps01.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=231116>

Teaching, Research and a Life? Finding the right balance.

Wednesday, April 22, 2015, 12-1pm in TEL 1009

Register at: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=179708>

Learn How to “DO” a Teaching Dossier

Monday April 27, 2015, 12-2pm in TEL 1014

Register at: <http://teachingcommonsforms.apps01.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=180326>

Workshops to be Rescheduled:

Please note that if you have already registered for any of these workshops, we will email you when it has been rescheduled. If you are interested to attend, please fill out the corresponding registration form and we will contact you when the workshop has been rescheduled. You can cancel your registration at any time. Please check our continuously updated [calendar](#) (address below) for the following workshops to be rescheduled.

http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/calendar/action~agenda/request_format~html/cat_ids~9/

How do I know I'm on the Right track? Strategies to evaluate my own teaching

Register at: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=178852>

Making the Grade: How to Tackle this Intimidating Teaching Task

Register at: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=221764>

Human Rights in the Classroom

Register at: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=177467>

Come and STAY (Supporting Teaching at York)

We are delighted to announce that the Supporting Teaching At York (STAY) Symposium will be continuing as planned. This symposium is designed to celebrate the efforts and the achievements of those of who have completed the Senior Teaching Assistant Program as they showcase their dedications and contributions to enhance and enrich student learning. Please join us in celebrating the achievements of the Senior Teaching Assistants and engage in this fun-filled day of workshops where we will share our teaching experiences and strategies with one another and participate in discussions about teaching.

When: Friday, May 1st, 2015

Registration: 9:00am to 9:30am

Symposium runs from 9:30am to 3:30pm

Location: TEL 0016

It is not too late for you to be able to earn a 'Record of Completion' Certificate. To see how your registration and participation in STAY may help you to achieve a certificate, please see our website for more details:

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/graduate-students/courses-workshops-and-events/courses/record-of-completion-certificate/>

Lunch will be provided to all who register.

Registration is a two-step process:

Step One: To register visit

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=210251>

Step Two: You are also required to register for individual sessions. For more information, please visit our website:

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/sta-conference/>

