

Teaching Commons News For Graduate Students

Welcome Back Summer!



After a somewhat cool and rainy spring, summer has finally arrived! For many graduate students this is a time to take a well-deserved break from one's studies. For others, summer is a time to start thinking about a new academic year and the opportunities, challenges, and experiences it will have to offer. For example, have you considered taking one of our certification courses?

Registration is now open for the Teaching Assistant Certificate in Teaching (TACT) and the Senior Teaching Assistant Course (STA). This issue also highlights last month's 'Record of Completion' Celebration, hosted by the Teaching Commons for TAs who have earned their Record of Completion certificate (June 22). Finally, we conclude the extended interview with Andrew Molas with Part Two (Read our June edition of *Teaching Commons News for Graduate Students* for Part One).

Registration is now OPEN for our TACT and STA Courses!!

Teaching Assistant Certificate in Teaching (TACT)

This [SEDA](#) accredited course is for Teaching Assistants to learn more about teaching in postsecondary education. It comprises 5 three hour face to face sessions plus an additional online component (4 online modules). Through [SEDA](#) and your completion of TACT, you will become part of an international network of people engaged in teaching and learning in higher education. Over the duration of the course you will develop your teaching dossier, which will then be your final assessment for the course. It can be later refined and used to obtain future employment in teaching.

This **free course** will be run in both the Fall and Winter terms. (Please note you need only register for one term). You **MUST** have at least one term of teaching experience. Preference is given to those who have completed the 'Record of Completion' Certificate Program. For dates and more information about TACT, please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/graduate-students/courses-workshops-and-events/courses/tact/> or email Mandy Frake-Mistak at mfmistak@yorku.ca.

To register for TACT for Fall 2015 visit:

<http://teachingcommonsforms.apps01.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=254199>

To register for TACT for Winter 2016 visit:

<http://teachingcommonsforms.apps01.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=255165>



Is there something that we can assist you with during the summer months? Are you (re)designing a course or reflecting on your TA experiences? For questions, concerns, consultations, please email us at teaching@yorku.ca.

We're here to help you!



Did you know that by obtaining a Record of Completion you are eligible to enroll in our TACT program?

Visit our website for more details about the requirements for the 'Record of Completion' Certificate.

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

Senior Teaching Assistant Program (STA)

This is another [SEDA](#) accredited course offered through the Teaching Commons for TAs interested in developing teaching and learning with their peers. Preference is given to those who have successfully completed TACT. Within this course, participants are expected to plan and deliver two educational events, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and acceptability of the events, and facilitate a session at our annual [Supporting Teaching At York Symposium \(STAY\)](#).

For dates and more information about STA, please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/graduate-students/courses-workshops-and-events/courses/senior-teaching-assistant-program/> or to register visit: <http://teachingcommonsforms.apps01.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=202345>. Should you have any further inquiries please email Natasha May at maynat@yorku.ca.

TA Orientation

All new graduate student TAs are invited to attend a TA Orientation session in the first week of September. During this 3 hour session you will be provided with resources and guidance to help you get started as a TA at York University.

In this session we will discuss topics such as your role and responsibility as a teaching assistant, how to effectively engage with your course director, strategies to design your curriculum and lesson plans.

To **register** visit our website: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/graduate-students/courses-workshops-and-events/events/ta-orientation/>

- September 1st 9:30am to 12:30pm or 1pm to 4pm in TEL 1014
- September 2nd 9:30am to 12:30pm or 1pm to 4pm in TEL 1014
- September 3rd 9:30am to 12:30pm in TEL 1014
- September 3rd 1pm to 4pm in TEL 1014 for **International Graduate Student TAs**

Celebrating TC's Record of Completion Awardees!

In June, the Teaching Commons hosted a **Record of Completion Celebration** where we recognized 30 graduate students whose dedication and commitment to teaching and learning are simply outstanding. The Teaching Commons is very proud of the graduate students who have earned a Junior or Senior Record of Completion Certificate. Congratulations!!

For more information about the 'Record of Completion' Certificate Program, please see our website: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/graduate-students/courses-workshops-and-events/courses/record-of-completion-certificate/>



“I think they are valuable resources”: Part Two of an Interview with Andrew Molas



Name: **Andrew Molas**

Teaches in: **Philosophy, Liberal Arts and Professional Studies**

Degree: **Ph.D, First Year**

What year are you in? **First Year**

Research Topic: **I am currently interested in the role of empathy in mental health care**

TA experience prior to this year: **No TA experience prior to Fall-Winter 2014-2015**

1. What was your most valuable learning experience through participating in the Teaching Commons workshops?

It is hard to say I learned just one, or a few, valuable things from the Teaching Commons workshops...I think the fact that the workshop topics were diverse enough to cover a broad range of topics was really helpful, and by attending almost all of them, I am much better informed of many things and/or issues that may pop up while I am a TA.

2. In what way do you feel the TACT program contributed to your teaching practice? What do you think was your most valuable learning experience with TACT?

...I think the most valuable learning experience I had with TACT was that the course is designed to make *you*, the TA, reflect on your pedagogy and critically examine *what* you think is important when it comes to teaching, *why* you think it is meaningful, and what are the kinds of values and beliefs you want to pass along to your students. As Mandy (our Course Director) stressed repeatedly throughout the course, "You get out of it what you put into it" and she was absolutely right. Myself and my fellow TACT members engaged in lengthy online discussions, reflecting on things which have worked well in our teaching practices, and things which didn't, and I think that constantly reflecting on one's pedagogy is something we, as educators, should be doing more of in order to improve ourselves and improve our students' learning. I think there is always room for improvement, whether you are a First-Year PhD or a Fifth-Year PhD: teaching and education is never a static phenomenon. It changes with the times and sometimes we have to embrace that change and adjust our teaching styles if necessary.

3. What advice would you give new TAs at York?

One piece of advice for a new TA at York would be: Take the time to develop a meaningful connection with your students. Treat them with respect, show them that you value their contributions in the classroom. Try to be as inclusive as possible when you lead your tutorial because the earlier you can shift the focus from yourself to your students, the better. Don't be afraid to be vulnerable, either.

In addition to being educators and teaching our students course material so they can understand it, I think the responsibility of a TA is to encourage and inspire students, to make them feel confident in their abilities. A successful TA will allow that to happen; an unsuccessful TA will stifle it.

Finally, I think it is a good idea to pursue the things offered by the Teaching Commons ('Record of Completion' Certificates, TACT, STA) at the *beginning* of your degree, rather than scrambling at the end of it to try and get these things done while finishing your dissertation or Major Research Paper. I think it is important to lay down a firm pedagogical foundation, early on, which you can build upon rather than trying to change your teaching style after you've become stuck in your ways.

This interview has been very slightly condensed and edited.



Have a great

from the Teaching Commons. Take some time to

