

Teaching Commons News For Graduate Students

Gearing up for the Fall

At the Teaching Commons we are busy preparing all of our programming for the 2014-2015 academic year. In this issue we feature some new initiatives and workshops we are excited to share with you in the Fall, particularly our new programs for International TAs (ITAs).

ITA Orientations, Workshops and Events

At York, we are fortunate to have students from around the world participating in our graduate programs enriching the academic life of the university. The knowledge and background of our International Graduate Student population bring interesting and diverse global perspectives to our York University learning community. Not unlike any new TA, ITAs may experience anxiety and uncertainty with respect to their new role and classroom responsibilities; however, it is not uncommon for ITAs to experience additional challenges and considerations as they transition into their new Canadian academic culture at York University. For instance, one may feel uneasy about going into a class where students speak another language, not to mention the possible differences in methods of pedagogical delivery, grading and assessment and overall curricular design. Furthermore there are many differences within higher educational systems around the world that may require support to understand Canadian educational culture and teaching expectations at York University.

To support you, we will be offering an ITA Orientation, specifically designed for International Graduate Student TAs. The same session will be offered twice in the first week of September at different times to accommodate various schedules. Please register for ONE of the following sessions, by clicking on the time of your choosing:

- September 3rd [2pm to 5pm](#) in TEL 1014
- September 4th [10am to 1pm](#) in TEL 1009

In addition to our new line up of ITA Orientations this Fall, the Teaching Commons will be offering new workshops and resources designed to support ITAs for the Canadian classroom experience at York. The following is an upcoming workshop for ITAs:

I'm not just new to York, I'm new to Canada: Strategies for International TAs
October 9, 2014, 12-1pm in TEL 1014

To register, please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=171216>

For more information and an evolving list of events and resources, please see our webpage: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/for-all-graduate-students/for-international-teaching-assistants-itas/>



Did you know?

The Teaching Commons has an extensive list of Teaching and Learning Resources frequently used by all those who teach at York. Visit

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/resources-for-tas/>

We also offer general TA Orientation sessions. See our website to register:

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/professional-development/ta-orientation/>

Highlighting New Professional Development Workshops

The professional development workshops are designed to provide support, practical strategies and advice to **ALL** Graduate Students at York University including new TAs. These sessions are facilitated by Teaching Commons Staff, Faculty and Staff members from across the university, and participants in our Senior Teaching Assistant (STA) program. The topics are designed to offer support at every level of teaching experience. Please visit our website for upcoming workshop offerings for the 2014-2015 academic year. <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/ta-sessions/>

New Marking and Grading Workshop

Marking and Grading Workshop September 5, 2014, 10am-4pm in TEL 1014

This new workshop is designed for those who have received a Marker/Grader position as well as any Graduate TA (new or experienced) interested in developing sound assessment and grading practices. This full-day session will address types of formative and summative grading practices, explore validity and reliability issues, as well as offer participants practical strategies for grading with rubrics and supporting the ESL undergraduate student. Table discussions and group sharing activities will allow participants the opportunity to apply their knowledge gained from this workshop by grading sample assignments with their peers.

To register, please visit <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=134152>

New Academic Literacies Workshops

Teaching Critical Reading Skills Workshop for TAs October 2, 2014, 10am-12pm in TEL 1014

Having trouble getting your students to do the readings? Academic reading is central to academic success at university, so why is it so difficult to convince students to keep up with course readings? Effective academic reading is time-consuming, requires deep attention, critical reflection, the ability to connect readings to one another and to course objectives, and often requires approaching difficult readings more than once. Though experienced scholars understand this, students may not. This session focuses on “unpacking the skill set” required for effective academic reading and provides ideas about how to foster these skills in your students.

To register please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=167497>

Teaching Critical Writing Skills Workshop for TAs October 2, 2014, 12:30pm-2:30pm in TEL 1014

This workshop, co-facilitated by a writing skills professor and a librarian, will highlight strategies, assignments and resources that can be used by TAs to strengthen undergraduate students' skills in writing quality research papers and assignments.

Writing good research papers involves mastery of a complex set of process-focused skills, which may often be taken-for-granted. Examples include creating a working thesis, developing effective research strategies, gathering and noting ideas, planning an effective essay structure, and other strategic approaches to writing and editing. This workshop will teach participants how to unpack these commonly taken-for-granted skills; that is, techniques will be shared for making the implicit aspects of writing and research explicit. In addition, drawing on SPARK (<http://www.yorku.ca/spark>), an online modular tool designed to teach academic literacies, workshop participants will learn about:

- principles of effective assignment design for enhancing students' abilities to write good research papers by addressing and integrating the component skills of writing and research
- how SPARK modules may be effectively integrated within courses to teach students the skills needed to write better research papers
- how such SPARK resources as tip sheets, worksheets, and exercises may be used or adapted to teach relevant skills

To register, please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=169987>

Upcoming Professional Development Workshops

Designing your Tutorial

September 18, 2014, 12pm-1pm in TEL 1014

Teaching Students with Disabilities: Tips for Teaching Assistants

September 22, 2014, 12pm-1pm in TEL 1014

Teaching with Technology and in an Online Environment

September 29, 2014, 12pm-1pm in TEL 1014

To register for these sessions visit <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/ta-sessions/>

An Update on your Registrations for our Programs

If you pre-registered or applied for one of our programs beginning in the fall, see below for an update on how to determine your status or the next steps you should take...

TA Certificate in Teaching (TACT) Course

Pre-registration for the Fall 2014 Session of TACT is now closed. If you filled out our "registration of interest" form for the Fall 2014 Session, the course director, Dr. Yelin Su, will be in contact with you shortly, via email, to explain the steps you must take and the requirements you must meet in order to officially register and enrol in the Fall 2014 Session of the TA Certificate in Teaching (TACT) Course.

If you missed pre-registration for the Fall 2014 session, not to worry as we will offer another session in Winter 2015. To pre-register for the Winter 2015 Session of TACT, please fill out the following "registration of interest" form:

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=127427> by November 1, 2014.

Please note that filling out the above form does not guarantee you a spot in the TACT Course nor is it a registration for the course. It merely indicates your interest in the course and allows us to email you the formal registration form with all of the requirements and information.

Senior Teaching Assistant (STA) Program

The deadline for submitting applications for the Senior Teaching Assistant (STA) program has been extended until August 8! If you have completed the TA Certificate in Teaching (TACT) Program and are interested in continuing with your professional development, please apply for a place in the STA Program, by filling out the following form: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=129004>

We will contact you by email before August 18, 2014 with our decision. Please visit <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/professional-development/senior-teaching-assistant-program/> for more information on this program.

If you applied for the STA Program prior to July 21, 2014 we have already sent you an email with our decision and have asked that you confirm your attendance at all four face-to-face sessions and the STAY Symposium on Friday May 1, 2015. If you have not yet responded, please do so as soon as possible. For inquiries, please email Natasha May: maynat@yorku.ca



What do STAs say about the Program?

"I have a lot more confidence and passion for teaching after completing the STAY Program."

"I became more inclusive, more sensitive to TA's and Student's teaching/learning culture."

"I am so grateful for the skills acquired and I also want to contribute to assisting other students learn how to improve themselves."

"Recognition and details related to active learning affected my classroom management/evaluative strategies."

"The STA Program allowed me to talk to other TAs and learn through their experiences."