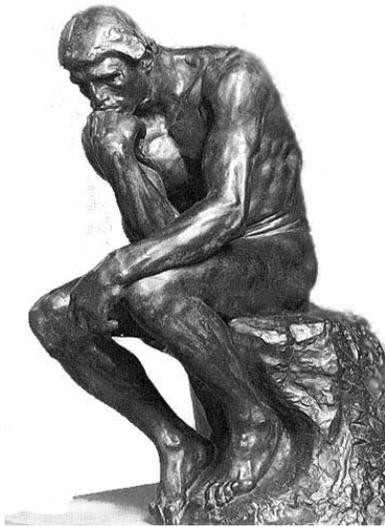


Teaching Commons News For Graduate Students

2015 – A Fresh Start!

What are your teaching and learning goals and aspirations for 2015? As you venture into the new year and new academic term, consider integrating active reflection as part of your teaching practice. “Reflection,” according to Bleakley (1999) “needs body, passion, sensitivity to context, and above all, begs for style, or, again, in Schön’s word, ‘artistry’” (p. 319). According to Schön, reflective practice can encompass reflection “on action” (a retrospective contemplation of an event after it has taken place) or “in-action” (thinking and doing coinciding with moment to moment adaptation). As you continue to evolve your teaching practice, active reflection on- and in-action can become a powerful strategy to improve one’s teaching practice.



Part of an evolving reflective practice includes getting feedback from your students and/or peers and mentors. Consider downloading our Graduate TA feedback guide, which provides strategies on obtaining this feedback as well as strategies for self-evaluation and reflections on one’s teaching. <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2014-09-Feedback-Guide-Final.pdf>



The TC’s 2014-2015 Senior Teaching Assistant Candidates



In the spirit of starting anew, the Teaching Commons has lined up a number of new and exciting workshops facilitated by our 2014-2015 STA participants. As part of their course requirement, STAs have designed a number of fantastic Professional Development Workshops. Be sure to visit our website at <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/ta-sessions/> as our list continues to grow.

To learn more about our STA program visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/professional-development/senior-teaching-assistant-program/>

From left to right, front row: Afarin Mansouri, Irma Spahiu, Andrea Kalmin, Nicole Bernhardt, Dhruv Jain, Ann Henley
From left to right, back row: Raj Singh, Alex Bicket, Brian Nairn, Masaki Kondo, Roland Shainidze, Gloria Adagbon

Upcoming Discipline-Specific Workshops

How to be an Effective Music Teaching Assistant

Wednesday, January 14, 2015, 12-1pm, ACE 241

Teaching a music tutorial can sometimes be very challenging. Some aspects such as communication with supervisors, clarity about our rights and responsibilities, applying active learning strategies, and keeping students motivated are fundamental aspects, influencing our teaching experience. During this workshop, participants will work in small groups, share some of the challenges they have experienced, and together we will find strategies that can assist music TAs teach more effectively.

To register, please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=215106>

Facilitated By: Afarin Mansouri, Senior Teaching Assistant, Department of Music

Communicating Science Effectively: Lightning Round Teaching in the Lab

Wednesday, January 14, 2015, 12-1pm, TEL 1009

There are many unique challenges for TAs in a laboratory based science course. This workshop will introduce science TAs to methods for presenting scientific ideas to undergraduate students. The goals of the workshop are to improve pre-lab talks, provide the means to effectively structure and organize time in the lab, provide tips on using visual aids effectively, and give TAs an opportunity to discuss their positive and negative experiences related to teaching in the laboratory setting.

To register, please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=219890>

Facilitated By: Alex Bicket, Senior Teaching Assistant, Department of Biology

Upcoming Professional Development Workshops

Teaching Critical Writing Skills

Monday, January 26, 2015, 2-4pm, 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 TA's 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

Please remember all our courses are free of charge and are open to all Graduate Students (Visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/for-all-graduate-students/>)



Have you ever considered putting yourself forward for a teaching award? **The President's University-Wide Teaching Awards** honour those who, through innovation and commitment, have significantly enhanced the quality of learning by York students. One award is offered each year to a **Teaching Assistant**. For details see http://yfile.news.yorku.ca/2015/01/07/nominate-a-great-teacher-for-one-of-four-teaching-awards-3/?utm_source=YFile_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningEmail



- how such SPARK resources as tip sheets, worksheets, and exercises may be used or adapted to teach relevant skills

Facilitated by: Ron Sheese and Sophie Bury

To register, please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=208447>

Designing Effective Teaching Techniques by Measuring Student Attention Spans

Friday, January 30, 2015, 12:30-2pm, Osgoode Hall Law School, Room 2003

How long can you reasonably expect your students to sustain attention in the classroom? One common belief is that the typical student's attention span is about 10 to 15 minutes long. However, it is discovered that classroom attention is not as linear as previously thought and is actually impacted by various factors throughout the duration of a class. This workshop explores the attention span of a typical student by presenting several interesting studies made on student attention. According to these studies, sustained attention varies widely, and the quality of attention depends, among others factors, on the time of day, motivation, emotion, and enjoyment. Instructors/TAs may have to use a variety of strategies to increase student attention during class, and some of these strategies may be known to them, but have been undermined or not used to their full potential. The workshop involves active learning and requires participants to engage in discussions regarding their experiences with student attention. They may share their teaching techniques on how to measure attention and keep students engaged in class.

Facilitated by: Irma Spahiu, Senior Teaching Assistant, Osgood Hall Law School

To register, please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/forms/view.php?id=225988>

Foundations Seminar

First Foundations Seminar of the New Year - "Beyond Critical Thinking"

Foundations TA's are invited to participate in the year's first seminar featuring Professor Michael Gilbert.

This seminar will take place on Tuesday, January 20th at 12:30, in the Vanier College Senior Common Room, 010. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Brief Description of this session: Critical Thinking is just about the most important course a student can take, and importing it into every subject is to be applauded. There is, however, a lack. That lack is the lacuna between how we teach argument structure, and the actual arguments people use in everyday life. Professor Gilbert's talk will focus on the difference between arguments as products or artifacts, and arguments as processes or interactions. Tools for teaching interactive arguments will also be identified.

A light lunch will be provided. In order to provide us with an accurate account of numbers for the lunch, please email stweyman@yorku.ca by Thursday, January 15th.

First-time Foundations TA's attending this session may be paid for one hour's compensation at the CUPE overload rate, to a maximum of 7 hours of payment.

Facilitated by: Michael A. Gilbert.

Michael received his PhD in Philosophy from the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada in 1974, and he is now full Professor of Philosophy at York University. His books in argumentation are *How to Win an Argument*, now in a third edition, and in 1997, the monograph *Coalescent Argumentation*. His newest book, *Arguing with People*, was published this past May by Broadview Press. He has published numerous articles on argumentation in *Argumentation*, *Informal Logic*, and other journals.



The TC's First Bi-Annual Record of Completion (ROC) Celebration

On Thursday December 4, 2014 the Teaching Commons Lounge was filled with laughter, warmth and celebration as twenty five new TAs were honoured for their commitment and dedication to teaching and learning at York University by earning a Junior Record of Completion Certificate.



The requirements to obtain this certificate are to attend at least 5 Professional Development Workshops offered by the Teaching Commons within one academic year. The individuals honoured at this celebration have attended between 5 and 12 different workshops since only September!



Teaching Commons Tutors and Senior Teaching Assistants joined in the celebration, engaged in conversation about teaching and were there to thank these new TAs for being active participants in the workshops they facilitated. Both the new and more experienced TAs discussed their teaching experiences and shared ideas of how to improve undergraduate student learning at York with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Professor Barbara Crow and Associate Vice

President of Teaching and Learning, Professor Sue Vail.

The next Record of Completion Celebration is scheduled for June of 2015. For details on how your attendance at our workshops can earn you a 'Record of Completion' Certificate, please see our website:

<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/teaching-assistant-record-of-completion-certificate/>

STAY Symposium – Supporting Teaching At York

Come STAY!! (Come Support Teaching At York)

On May 1st, the Teaching Commons will host its 3rd Annual STAY Symposium. The symposium is designed to celebrate the efforts and the achievements of those who have completed the Senior Teaching Assistant (STA) Program as they showcase their dedications and contributions to enhance and enrich students learning. Participants who would like to earn a **Senior Record of Completion Certificate** must register for and attend all conference events in addition to attending at least four (4) professional development workshops. Please note that the above advertised discipline-specific and professional development workshops will count toward this certificate. For more information please visit: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/teaching-assistant-record-of-completion-certificate/>

To register for the STAY Symposium, please fill out the following form:

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

This newsletter is available as a .pdf at
<http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/newsletter-for-grad-students/>