



Loyola University, Chicago
Department of Theology

Teaching Preparation in the Theology Department

The Teaching Assistants

Our Ph.D. students on Assistantships are required to assist professors fifteen hours a week. This is usually divided so that two professors are given assistance for seven and a half hours per week.

In their first year of study, these doctoral students are only allowed to act as Research Assistants and may not be expected to teach. In their second year of courses these students become 'Teaching Assistants'. Most basically, these assist in grading, and sometimes have office hours, depending on the professor. Professors who request a Teaching Assistant understand however, that the student must be invited to give two and hopefully three lectures. We ask that the professor be a mentor here, meeting with the student, reviewing the class the student has in mind, and meeting with them afterward, to praise their accomplishments, and to invite any questions about the class, and respond to the student's request for suggestions with positive criticism. At the conclusion of each semester, professors report on the student performance. These are kept on file.

****Students who enter on Scholarship or special award**, are not required to work as either a Research or Teaching Assistant. Our professors offer these students an opportunity to teach in their undergraduate core classes so that they can begin building their teaching portfolio. Otherwise they complete their work and have no experience for their CV. They are so grateful!

Teaching Pedagogy I:

In the Spring of their second year of course work, Ph.D. students take a seven session course "Teaching Preparation I" which is offered by the Department. The chairperson is responsible for requesting the faculty member who will conduct these sessions. The professors chosen are those who have a high rating in teaching (information to which the chairperson has access). The professor designs a syllabus for the course, which is open to a variety of topics but usually including: a. outcomes and goals; b. creating a good syllabus; c. creating a fine lecture; creating and preparing for interesting group work; d. the wise use of electronics and media; e. different modes of testing and types of knowledge that go with each; f. dealing with the offended student, or the difficult student, ie: conduct issues; g. safety and law issues and the chain of

command in the Department; h. how to create a teaching portfolio and how to interview. Students are given a signed certificate from the Department on the completion of this first set of teaching sessions.

Teachers of Record:

Teaching Mentors: Once Ph.D. students successfully pass their comprehensive exams, they are scheduled to teach a core class in the next semester. Each student must write to the GPD and request a Teaching Mentor, giving two or three choices. The student is to meet with the mentor to discuss the syllabus and texts. The teaching mentor is to receive all quizzes and tests one week before they have been scheduled to be given to the class. The mentor visits the classroom of the student at least twice, once a few weeks into the course, and once a few weeks before it closes. The student and teacher mentor are expected to meet to discuss the class. At the second meeting, the mentor has seen how the student has progressed. The teaching mentor fills out a review of the student that goes to the Professor in charge of student classes.

Teaching Pedagogy II: All of our first time teachers of record Ph.D. students have four or five sessions during the semester with one of our professors named by the chairperson, someone who is known for great teaching. These sessions allow the first time teachers to share their experiences, questions and mutually helpful suggestions.

Our Graduate School holds four Friday afternoon sessions each semester, for all first time teachers of record, and various issues are discussed concerning good teaching. Although we have teaching mentors and TPII just for the first semester that the students teach, the Graduate School requires the students to come the first two semesters of teaching.

Videotaping teaching. I encourage the new teachers to have one of our Ph.D. students who is very good at videotaping to come to film them lecturing and guiding group work on a few different occasions, so that clips can be used for a diskette to accompany the portfolio. This is an area where I want to encourage the students, who seem to be shy to arrange this.

New Moves? At present I plan to encourage the professors who have first year Ph.D. students as Research Assistants to teach two lectures in a core class and meet with the student before and after. At present I plan to ask the professors who have Teaching Assistants in the Spring of the student's second year to meet with them and allow them to plan a section of the syllabus and teach it. That work should be acknowledged by the student in their teaching portfolio, with the syllabus and the section they prepared.

Portfolio: My attention needs to turn to helping students create a fine portfolio. This is an area where I could use some help.

My Question: How can I encourage extra mentoring by the faculty?

Thank you.

Summary of Findings for April 2012 Summative Conference

Strengths of the Program

- The diverse strategies and teaching methods of their professors gave them ideas of how the students themselves would teach.
- The professors of the graduate students demonstrate compassion and caring for students that they wish to inculcate in themselves
- The classes they received prepared them excellently in content, and in a variety of areas, biblical, theology, and ethics.
- The Department offers a Pedagogy I course of Introduction.
- The Department offers a Pedagogy II course that allows the first time teachers of record to gather to discuss their questions about teaching.
- The “Teaching Assistant” duties include opportunities to teach a few lectures

Suggestions

A. Topics / Techniques for the Pedagogy I Class and for Professor Mentors

- Today’s Undergraduate and how to reach them.
- How do we prepare an excellent syllabus with them in mind
- Varying methods of Instruction to Make Learning Exciting
- Setting up Goals and Outcomes Assessments for a class

B. Pedagogical Issues to Discuss in the Pedagogy I Class and for Professor Mentors

- Is it ok to teach in a way that matches my personality? That is, if I am a quiet person, does that mean I will not be effective?
- How do I convey authority in the classroom?
- How do I keep from becoming defensive in the classroom?
- How should I deal with difficult dialogues, i.e. conflict in the classroom?
- How do I deal with problem behavior on the part of a student in the class?
- What do I do when a student comes with a person problem and I want to be concerned but I feel it is not my place to involve myself?
- How distant should I be from the students?

C. Being a Responsible Faculty Member in my Institution:

- How do I ‘read’ an institution, its ethos, and its culture? How do I come to know what matters here?
- How do I communicate to my other faculty members the so that expectations are the same of the students’ performance? Is there a way to talk about that in a Department?
- What are the “politics” of Institutional life?
- What are the main legal issues relative to teaching of which I should be aware?
- How do I prepare for feedback from my peers on my performance when I am being adjudicated?

D. Other Observations and Suggestions

- What advice can you give to a Ph.D. on how to be a teacher of record, and still attend to the dissertation?
- What advice would you give about the contents of an impressive teaching portfolio?
- Teaching mentors are very important, and could take a more active role in meeting with the first time teacher of record, to discuss their questions, and offer helpful advice.

Prepared by Dr. Wendy Cotter c.s.j
Graduate Program Director
Theology Department
Loyola University
Chicago, Illinois