Seminar in College Teaching

Course Numbers: ACAS 601, #6729; RPOS 611, #8086; RPAD 590, #6404  
Classroom: ITLAL Underground LI B-69

Instructors:  
Aviva Bower, Ph.D., Instructional Consultant, ITLAL adbower@albany.edu  
Office: LI B-69 E  
Phone: 442-3657

Kimberly Van Orman, Ph.D., Instructional Consultant, ITLAL kvanorman@albany.edu  
Office: LI B-69 I  
Phone: 442-3654

Office Hours: Appointments are recommended. Feel free to drop in, but please understand that we might have other obligations that prevent us from meeting with you at that time. Kimberly and Aviva are in ITLAL every week day from 9-4:30.

Course Description: This course will provide an overview of the college teaching challenge, using the scholarship of teaching and learning. We will consider the practical implications of a research-driven approach to pedagogy.

Principles Driving the Course: This course will operate under a set of beliefs that we want to pass on to you as current and future teachers of undergraduate students. We believe that undergraduate students are capable of learning, will work hard when they can see the value of that work, and bring valuable knowledge and experience to your courses. All of the work we do in this course will be built on those premises.

Course Objectives: By the end of this course, students will be able to  
• describe and differentiate among best teaching practices according to specific learning goals,  
• design a course to facilitate student learning, and  
• produce a statement of teaching philosophy that demonstrates a reflective attitude toward the process of teaching.

Required Texts:  
• Linda Nilson, Teaching at Its Best, 4th ed.  
• Additional readings available in Blackboard

Electronic Resources: Blackboard

Team Based Learning: This course will be taught using the Team-Based Learning method.  
The Approach:  
A large body of research shows that people learn best from concrete experience, interacting with other learners as well as content, engaging in challenging reading and writing tasks, being held accountable for their work, and receiving frequent feedback on their progress. The TBL approach will accommodate all of these dimensions. What will this look like?

The Process:  
The course content is divided into three learning sequences, with each sequence focused on a key concern for college-level instructors. You will do much of the processing and analysis of the course reading in teams into which you will be placed on the first day and will remain for the entire semester. Your interactions and performance in your team will be crucial to your success in the course. For each sequence, we will go through a similar set of steps:
1. You will read a set of foundational readings for the sequence on your own and will take a Readiness Assessment Test (RAT) on that reading at the beginning of the learning sequence. You will take each RAT twice—once on your own and once in your team. Your individual and team RAT grades will be averaged to calculate your final score.
2. As the sequence progresses, you will do additional reading and will engage in activities (both as individuals and in teams) around the key concepts.
3. As you work through the reading and activities, there may be occasional mini-lectures to help fill in gaps in your understanding.

Assignments/Evaluations: This course is graded S/U, and grades will be assigned based on the percentages below. Students must achieve the equivalent of a “C” or higher in the course in order to receive an “S.” (Please note: This means that it is not possible to receive an “S” in the course without submitting a final learning portfolio.)

1) Personal Goals Statement (5%): Students will complete a brief reflection at the beginning of the semester that will articulate their goals for participation in the seminar according to the guidelines posted on Blackboard. Students will also revisit this statement at the semester’s end and reflect on their progress as part of the final learning portfolio. A draft of this statement is due by 5:00 pm on 9/15 and a revised draft is due on 10/04. Both drafts will be submitted on Blackboard. Please bring a printed copy to class on 9/27 for a feedback activity we will be doing.

2) Homework and In-Class Tasks (10%): A major component of your participation in the course will be involvement in class tasks and discussions as well as various course design activities. Out of class tasks will be completed and graded on an individual basis (in Blackboard), and team activities, completed in class, will be graded on a team basis. Many of the individual tasks that you complete will become part of the final learning portfolio (specifically preparatory tasks for syllabi).

3) Readiness Assurance Tests (RATs) (10%): Students will complete short multiple choice tests at the beginning of each sequence both as individuals and as teams. Team scores can be appealed if evidence can be supplied to justify a change in grade. Because the process of completing the tests as a team is essential to the experience (and the learning), there will be no opportunities for make-up RATs except in extreme circumstances with appropriate documentation. RATs will be given in class on 9/27, 10/18, and 11/15.

4) Team Member Performance (5%): Because your work in your teams is crucial to your success in this course as well as that of your teammates, you will be held accountable for your contribution to your team. You will, as a class, determine the criteria for evaluation. Your team members will give you feedback on your performance twice during the semester, and the final evaluation will be part of your grade. Midterm (formative) feedback will be given in class at the midpoint of our course, and final (summative) feedback will be given on 11/29.

5) Draft of Teaching Philosophy Statement (10%): You will be asked to write a draft of a statement of teaching philosophy, an essential document for a future faculty member. More information about the process of writing this statement will be available later in the semester. You will receive feedback on this draft, and along with your revised statement, it will become part of your final Learning Portfolio. A draft of your teaching philosophy statement is due at class time 11/1 on Blackboard. Please bring a printed copy to class for a feedback activity we will be doing.

6) Draft of Lesson Plan (10%): You will be asked to write a detailed lesson plan for one class period of the course you are designing along with a brief explanation of the context of the lesson and a reflection on its design. More guidance about how to design a lesson plan will be available later in the semester. You will receive feedback on this draft, and along with your revised lesson plan, it
will become part of your final Learning Portfolio. **Draft lesson plans are due at class time 11/8 on Blackboard. Please bring a printed copy to class for a feedback activity we will be doing.**

7) **Draft of Syllabus (10%)**: Throughout the semester, you will be designing a course that you would like to teach and developing a draft syllabus for that course. Information about designing a syllabus will be made available throughout the semester. You will be asked to submit a full draft, including a course calendar, for feedback. This draft, along with a revised syllabus, will become part of your final Learning Portfolio. **Syllabus drafts are due at class time 11/29 on Blackboard. Please bring a printed copy to class for a feedback activity we will be doing.**

8) **Learning Portfolio (40%)**: As a cumulative project, each student will submit a Learning Portfolio (which should serve as the basis for an eventual professional teaching portfolio). This portfolio will comprise the following elements:
   a. Personal Goals Statement (from beginning of semester) with final reflection
   b. Draft and Revised Lesson Plan with Reflective Statement
   c. Draft and Revised Teaching Philosophy Statement with Reflective Statement
   d. Draft and Revised Syllabus with Reflective Statement and Preparatory Materials

**Final drafts of Learning Portfolios are due by 5:00pm on 12/15 on Blackboard.**

**Attendance**: Your in-class performance is crucial to your success in this course. While attendance itself is not graded, graded in-class activities and assignments constitute an important part of the final course grade. In many cases, work that you do in class will become part of your final Learning Portfolio. Missing class means earning an automatic “0” for the activities or assignments missed. No make-up opportunities will be available for in-class activities except in documented cases of extreme extenuating circumstances.

*Because of the importance of in-class work, you are expected to miss no more than one class meeting. If you find that you are unable to attend at least seven of the eight class meetings, you need to talk with the instructors about how this will affect your performance in the course.*

**Academic Integrity**: Academic honesty and integrity at all levels are essential to maintaining an environment of trust in the University community. Students are on their honor to be ethical and honest in carrying out all the assignments and requirements of this course. Any violations of this code, such as cheating, copying, plagiarism, or misrepresentation of one’s work, will meet with the appropriate penalties and disciplined as outlined in the UAlbany Standards of Academic Integrity, which can be found here: [http://www.albany.edu/eltl/academic_integrity.php](http://www.albany.edu/eltl/academic_integrity.php) (see “Standards of Academic Integrity.”)

The University at Albany Libraries provides a good tutorial about academic integrity at the University as well as a guide to avoiding plagiarism: [http://library.albany.edu/infolit/integrity](http://library.albany.edu/infolit/integrity). If you are not certain what constitutes plagiarism for any given assignment, please ask the instructors for clarification before submitting your work.

**Special Needs Policy**: Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructors with verification of your disability and will recommend appropriate accommodations.
**Class Meetings and Assignment Schedule**

**Sequence 1: Creating a Direction for your Course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting, Date, and Topic</th>
<th>Preparation for class and assignments due on Blackboard and in class (Readings in Blackboard are marked with an asterisk)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Meeting 1 (9/13)        | 1. **Required readings**  
  - Course syllabus  

2. **Assignment** *(submit ON BLACKBOARD by 5:00 pm on Friday, 9/15)*  
  - Draft of Personal Goals Statement |
| Introduction to course, Student Cognitive Development |  

| Meeting 2 (9/27)        | 1. **Required Readings** *(Note: There will be a Readiness Assurance Test over these readings at the beginning of class)*  
  - *Bean, “How Writing is Related to Critical Thinking” (Engaging Ideas, Chapter 2)*  
  - *Fink, “Integrated Course Design” (IDEA Paper #42)*  
  - Nilson, charts based on Bloom’s Taxonomy (pp. 22-23)  

2. **Assignment due IN CLASS 9/27**  
  - Printed copy of Personal Goals Statement for feedback |
| Course Goals and Beginning Course Design |  

| Meeting 3 (10/4)        | 1. **Required readings**  
  - *Fink, “A Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning” (excerpt)*  
  - *McKeachie and Svinicki, “Teaching Students How to Become More Strategic and Self-Regulated Learners” (McKeachie’s Teaching Tips, 12th ed., Chapter 23)*  
  - Nilson, “Building Critical Thinking into a Course Design” (Chapter 3)  
  - *Nilson, “Teaching your Students to Think and Write in your Discipline” (3rd ed., Teaching at its Best, Chapter 24)*  

2. **Assignment** *(submit ON BLACKBOARD by 12:35pm 10/4)*  
  - Learning Goals for your course (worksheet on pp. 11-12 of Fink excerpt)  
  - Revised draft of Personal Goals Statement  

3. **Assignment due IN CLASS 10/4**  
  - Printed copy of Learning Goals for your course for feedback |
### Sequence 2: Assessing Student Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting, Date, and Topic</th>
<th>Preparation for class and assignments due on Blackboard and in class (Readings in Blackboard are marked with an asterisk)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Meeting 4 (10/18): Student Assessment and Grading** | 1. **Required Readings** (Note: There will be a Readiness Assurance Test over these readings at the beginning of class)  
* Nilson, “Grading Student Assessments” (Chapter 27)  
* Nilson, “Meaning of Grades and Sound Grading Systems” (excerpt)  
* Walvoord, “Making Assignments Worth Grading” (*Effective Grading*, Chapter 3) |
| **Meeting 5 (11/1): Making Decisions about How to Spend Classroom Time** | 1. **Required Readings**  
* Bean, “Designing Tasks for Active Thinking and Learning” (*Engaging Ideas*, Chapter 7)  
* Huston, “Thinking in Class” (*Teaching What You Don’t Know*, Chapter 5)  
* Michaelsen and Sweet, “The Essential Elements of TBL,” pp. 7-12, 19-22 (*Team-Based Learning: Small-Group Learning’s Next Big Step*)  
2. **Assignments (submit ON BLACKBOARD by 12:35 pm 11/1)**  
* Revised Learning Goals for your course  
* Draft of Teaching Philosophy Statement  
3. **Assignments due IN CLASS 11/1**  
* Printed copy of revised Learning Goals for your course for an activity  
* Printed copy of draft of Teaching Philosophy Statement for feedback |
| **Meeting 6 (11/8): How to Implement Classroom Activities Effectively** | 1. **Required readings**  
* Nilson, “Lecturing for Student Learning” (Chapter 12)  
* Nilson, “Leading Effective Discussions” (Chapter 13)  
* Nilson, “The Case Method” (Chapter 17)  
2. **Assignment (submit ON BLACKBOARD by 12:35 pm 11/8)**  
* Draft of Lesson Plan  
3. **Assignment due IN CLASS 11/8**  
* Printed copy of draft of Lesson Plan for feedback |
**Sequence 3: Setting the Tone for Success**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting, Date, and Topic</th>
<th>Preparation for class and assignments due on Blackboard and in class (Readings in Blackboard are marked with an asterisk)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Meeting 7(11/15): Setting and Communicating Expectations Effectively | 1. Required Readings (Note: There will be a Readiness Assurance Test over these readings at the beginning of class)  
  - *Harris, “Motivating with the Course Syllabus” (National Teaching and Learning Forum 3.1)  
  - *Hirsch, “The Promising Syllabus Enacted: One Teacher’s Experience,” (Communication Teacher 24.2) FOCUS ON PAGES 82-90  
  - *Singham, “Death to the Syllabus!” (Liberal Education Fall 2007)  
  - *Singham, “Moving Away from the Authoritarian Classroom” (Change 37.3)  
  - *Smith, “First Day Questions for the Learner-Centered Classroom” (National Teaching and Learning Forum 17.5) |
| Meeting 8 (11/29): Managing the Classroom Effectively | 1. Required Readings  
  - *Huston, “Teaching and Surviving” (Teaching What You Don’t Know, Chapter 4)  
  - Nilson, “Creating a Welcoming Classroom Environment for all your Students” (Chapter 7)  
  - Nilson, “Preventing and Responding to Classroom Incivility” (Chapter 9)  
  2. Assignment (submit ON BLACKBOARD by 12:35 pm 11/29)  
  - Draft of course syllabus  
  3. Assignments due IN CLASS 11/29  
    - Printed copy of draft of course syllabus for feedback |

*Final Learning Portfolios due by 5:00pm on 12/15*