

PH607: TA Seminar

Department of Physics, Oregon State University
Fall 2009

Coordinator: Janet Tate, WGR 485, tate@physics.oregonstate.edu, 737-1700

Discussion leaders: Janet Tate, Chris Coffin, others TBA.

Meetings: Mondays 1-1:50 pm, WGR 377 (starts Sept 28, first day of class)

Syllabus: <http://physics.oregonstate.edu/~tate/COURSES/ph607/>

Course Description & Goals

This course is intended to support graduate students in their teaching experiences. The emphasis is on practicing general teaching skills, gaining knowledge of specific procedures in OSU courses, and discussing general classroom strategies.

Course Expectations

1. You should attend all seminars, well prepared, and willing to talk. If you cannot attend a seminar, please explain to the instructor well beforehand, or as soon as reasonably possible afterwards if the absence could not be foreseen.
2. Professional development. There are 2 projects for the term. You may do them in any order. A 1-2 page report of your experience in each is required. The first is due in class at the beginning of week 5; the second due by the beginning of week 9.
 - (a) Ask a senior TA or former TA to attend one of your classes and observe. Have a discussion afterwards about how the class went, how the students responded and what sorts of strategies you employed. Note that all TAs have additional time built into their schedules for professional development, so this assignment does not require asking a favor of them. If you have difficulty finding someone, please discuss with me.
 - (b) Attend one of the lectures/workshops offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning this Fall (<http://oregonstate.edu/ctl/workshops/workshops.php>) or undertake some other form of professional development (significant reading, AAPT meeting, other workshops let me know beforehand if you choose this option).
3. Participate actively and thoughtfully at all times.
4. Have the conviction to ask and respond to difficult questions, take what may seem to be unpopular positions, and admit when you do not know.
5. Have the patience to listen to others and respect their opinions. Allow yourself to be persuaded and be willing to change your mind.
6. Think, write, and engage with your peers and students in a professional and scholarly manner. Foster a professional and collegial learning environment that is purposeful, intellectually stimulating, honest, disciplined, caring, and supportive.

Grading

P/N, based on attendance, participation, and satisfactory completion of both assignments.

Reports

Your report on your professional development experience should explain briefly what the activity was, what new skills or knowledge emerged as a result, and reflect on how it changed or affirmed your teaching philosophy and practices. Regarding the peer mentoring, you need not report on any particular details of the feedback (this is not your teaching evaluation), but rather what issues you discussed and how your teaching philosophy has evolved.

Recommended reading

A New TA's guide to Teaching - Kathleen A. Harper & Sandra Doty, Wiley 2008. (Very practical guide. Copies in main office can be signed out; please return after 1st year)

Peer Instruction - Eric Mazur, Prentice Hall, 1997. (The first 6 chapters – 42 pages – constitute the reading matter. The rest are all examples – very useful!)

They're not Dumb, They're Different – Sheila Tobias, Research Corporation, 1990. (An interesting experiment in which intelligent, accomplished "science avoiders" take science classes.)

OSU Resources for TAs (updated 2009)

EOP Educational Opportunities Program, 337 Waldo Hall
<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/eop/>

SSS Student Support Services Center, 324 Waldo Hall
<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/sss/index.htm>

ASC Academic Success Center, 102 Waldo Hall
<http://success.oregonstate.edu/>

DAS Disability Access Services (let students bring this up)
<http://ds.oregonstate.edu/home/>

CAPS Counseling and Psychological Services, Snell Hall
<http://oregonstate.edu/counsel/>

CTL Center for Teaching and Learning , CTL 116 Waldo Hall
<http://oregonstate.edu/ctl/index.php>