The Teaching of Undergraduate Sociology

Sociology S506, Section 5386
Fall, 2013
Classroom: KS-ISR, Rm. 100
Tuesday, 4:45-6:45 p.m.
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Brian Powell and Jane VanHeuvelen
Office: Ballantine Hall, Rm. 776
Office Hours: Wednesday between 1:30 and 3:00 p.m. after class and by appointment
Jane VanHeuvelen’s email: jdschlap@umail.iu.edu

Course Description

The primary goal of this class is to assist you in becoming a first-rate undergraduate sociology instructor. More specifically, this course aims to help you: improve your skill at various teaching activities (e.g., lecturing, leading discussions, and evaluating and motivating students); become sensitive to sociological/social psychological phenomena that appear in college classrooms; formulate a teaching style and philosophy that you can expand and refine with experience; and learn about the policies and politics of higher education. Perhaps most importantly, this course is intended to provide you, as a new instructor, with a forum for sharing your experiences with and obtaining support from your peers.

Course periods will be organized around mini-lectures, group or guest presentations, and discussions of experiences relevant to the topic of the day. In addition, we will leave time each class period to discuss questions and problems that come up during the course of your teaching that are not directly related to the topic of the day.

Course Requirements

1. Active participation in the seminar. Because most seminars will be organized around discussion of some problem or question, the quality of the course depends on the quality of your participation. Attendance is, of course, a necessary but not sufficient requirement of participation. We expect you to attend all classes, but we recognize that something may require you to miss one class. Except in extraordinary circumstances, each absence beyond one will result in a reduction of your course grade by one step (e.g., from an A to an A-). Although we generally do not rely on readings for this seminar, on occasion we may assign some short teaching-related articles. Copies of these readings usually will be distributed in class or uploaded onto Oncourse.

2. Observation and evaluation of another student in the class. Each of you will need to arrange with another class member to observe you in the classroom and evaluate your instruction. The observer should provide oral (and, if possible, written) comments to the associate instructor being observed. This should be done in late September or early October, but no later than October 8. Both the observer and observed AI need to send confirmation of the observation and evaluation to both Brian Powell and Jane VanHeuvelen. NOTE: If during the summer you already observed and were observed by another student in the class, you are not required to do this again.

3. Arrangement of observation and evaluation of your class by Jane VanHeuvelen and then by Brian Powell in October or November.
4. Presentation for part of a class meeting. Early in the semester (by September 10), students (individually or as a duo/trio) will choose a topic relevant to the course and meet with us to discuss how to present the topic in class. The presentation can be relatively informal and typically should last 20-30 minutes of class time. At least one week before presenting (preferably even earlier), you should confer with Brian Powell and Jane VanHeuvelen about the particulars of the presentation. Among the topics that we would like you to consider (although other topics are welcome) are:
   a. What should be covered in introductory sociology?
   b. Critical reasoning/Bloom taxonomy
   c. Values/balance and the “academic bills of rights”
   d. Gender and/or race issues in the classroom
   e. Media, technology, and/or art in the classroom
   f. International students/international AIs; traditional/non-traditional students

5. Completion of a preliminary teaching dossier, which should include: copies of your syllabi; your vitae; examples of exams, class handouts, and exercises; any scholarly writings on teaching; student evaluations (both formal and informal); and a teaching statement. Although the target date for submitting the dossier is December 3 (after Thanksgiving break), you can submit the dossier as late as December 16.

6. Completion of a final course paper describing the highlights and difficulties in your first (and/or second) teaching experience at Indiana University. To write this paper, we would like you to maintain an informal, ongoing written commentary or journal on your teaching during the current semester (at the end of the semester you turn in the paper, not the ongoing commentary; however, I might ask to take a look at your ongoing commentary earlier in the semester). The paper you turn in should be a reflective, self-critical analysis of your experience and cover at least all of the following points: 1) what went wrong and why? 2) what went right and why? 3) what would/will you do differently next time, and how and why? The paper should be 10-15 pages (double-spaced and typed) in length and the target date for submitting the paper is the last day of class (December 10), although you can submit this paper as late as December 16. NOTE: These papers will be part of the collection of essays (in the Weatherly Lounge) for future S506 students to use as an aid in preparing for their own teaching.

7. Optional: You can choose to write a paper that will be submitted for presentation at a regional or national conference or for review to a teaching-oriented journal (e.g., Teaching Sociology). This paper can be single- or co-authored. We will help you with the development and writing of the paper. The paper can cover a variety of topics. Some possibilities include:
   a. The use of film in a specific course (e.g., family)
   b. Problems experienced by graduate students who teach for the first time
   c. Strategies to teach sociological concepts (e.g., institutionalized racism)
   d. Incorporating theoretically difficult material in the classroom (e.g., post-modernism)
   e. Teaching as public sociology; public sociology as teaching

8. For graduate students who will not be teaching this semester: Some of the key courses requirements cannot be completed until after you have taught for the department. During this semester, you will be expected to actively participate in class (#1) and present on a topic of pedagogical interest (#4). You also are expected to present guest lectures in at least two undergraduate sociology classes (note: you should give the same lecture in both classes), observe and evaluate an AI, and observe a class taught by a sociology professor (preferably more than one sociology professor). At the end of the semester, you will receive a grade of I (incomplete) or R (incomplete)
progress). After you meet the other course requirements (being observed, completing a teaching dossier, and writing the final paper) during the semester you teach, your grade of R/I will be removed.

**Grading**

Your grade will be based on classroom participation (70%) and written work (30%).

**Tentative Course Schedule (Note: this schedule will change once you send me the topics that you plan to present in class).**

May 6 (9:30-noon)  PRE-SEMESTER WORKSHOP #1
Introduction to course  
Syllabus construction

May 29 (1:00-4:00)  PRE-SEMESTER WORKSHOP #2
Reviewing syllabi  
The first week of class

August 21 (1:00-4:00)  What makes a good instructor?  
The best and worst techniques of discussion leaders and lecturers  
Methods of instruction: lecture

August 27  Methods of instruction: lecture (continued)

September 3  Methods of instruction: discussion

September 10  Methods of instruction: discussion (continued)  
**Note: Bring a brief description of the topic that you plan to discuss.**

September 17  Methods of instruction: evaluating your students  
-Bloom’s taxonomy  
-Determining reasonable expectations of student performance  
-Constructing exams and quizzes  
-Assigning papers  
-Grading/Data from the college and the department

September 24  Respect and rapport: the emotional climate of the classroom  
-Typologies of students, student profiles, and “Problem students”  
-Dealing with authority  
-The life cycle of the course  
-Dealing with the range of students at a public university  
-Dealing with disinterest in the classroom, problems and complaints  
-Dealing with students outside of the classroom  
-Advising students  
**NOTE: By now, you should have made arrangements to observe and be observed by another Associate Instructor from class.**
October 1  Respect and rapport: the emotional climate of the classroom (continued)
Note: By now, you should have made arrangements with Jane VanHeuvelen and Brian Powell to observe you.
Note: Deadlines for several regional sociology conferences are in October and November. If you plan to submit a paper, often an abstract will suffice.

October 8  Panel (TBA): “Seasoned Associate Instructors Tell All”

October 15  Diversity in the classroom: race, gender, sexuality, and nationality
Sexual harassment: issues and policies

October 22  Different teaching styles
Ethics in teaching
Values in the classroom

October 29  Preparing a teaching dossier

November 5  Teaching Introductory Sociology

November 12  To be announced
Note: I will not have my regular office hours on November 13. Feel free to arrange a different time to meet with me that week.

November 19  No class: observations of teaching. In lieu of class, Brian Powell will be available for individual meetings.

November 26  Thanksgiving Break.

December 3  Departmental, university, state, and national policies on higher education
Note: Target date to submit teaching dossier to Brian Powell.

December 10  How to end a semester, student evaluations, wrap-up
Note: Target date to submit reflection paper to Brian Powell.

December 16  Final exam week
Note: To receive a grade for S506, all required assignments must be submitted to Brian Powell by Monday, December 16 at 7:15 pm.
Teaching-Related Resources

At IU:
- Self-assessments of former 1st time teachers in several three-ring binders in Weatherly Lounge
- Copies of syllabi from past semesters are available in the main office for you to peruse.
- My office is a dumping ground for textbook publishers and book reps. Feel free to borrow them.
- For a complete listing formal, campus-based resources, go to http://citl.indiana.edu/ and http://teaching.iub.edu for a listing of teaching support services.
- For information about the Preparing Future Faculty program, go to www.iub.edu/~soc/gr_pffprogram.html.

Books on Techniques and Theories of Teaching:
- Angelo and Cross, Classroom Assessment Techniques: And Handbook for College Teachers
- Becker and Andrews, The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
- Campbell, Blalock, and McGee, Teaching Sociology
- Goldsmid and Wilson, Passing on Sociology
- Lowman, Mastering the Techniques of Teaching
- Mann, et al., The College Classroom: Conflict, Change, and Learning
- McKeachie, Teaching Tips
- Pescosolido and Aminzade, The Social Worlds of Higher Education
- Zanna and Darley, The Compleat Academic

Journal, Newspapers, Handbooks:
Chronicle of Higher Education (see also, the website Academe Today, www.chronicle.com)
College Teaching
Handbook for Associate Instructors and Evaluations of Teaching Handbook
Inside Higher Ed (http://insidehighered.com/)
Teaching of Psychology
Teaching Political Science
Teaching Sociology
The Feminist Teacher
The Journal of Higher Education
The Teaching Professor

Materials from the ASA Teaching Resource Center:
The resources available from the ASA are simply too numerous to list here, but they include a number of publications on basic teaching techniques, as well as more detailed treatments involving the use of computers, videos, and writing in sociology classes. They also have syllabi sets for a wide range of sociology courses. See the ASA website at www.asanet.org/teaching/resources.cfm.

Other Resources:
In addition to Brian Powell and Jane VanHeuvelen, most professors and A.I.’s in the Department of Sociology have indicated that they would be willing to confer with associate instructors on teaching-related issues. You should also keep an eye out for announcements concerning workshops offered through the Preparing Future Faculty program and the Teaching Resources Center.