Seminar Spring 2013

Teaching Techniques and Methods in the Social Sciences

Sven Steinmo

Thursdays 11:00 AM- 1:00 PM, Badia Seminar Room 4

Registration with Martina Selmi (martina.selmi@eui.eu)

Training in research and scholarship at the European University Institute is world class by any standard. Unfortunately, this structure of the program offers too few opportunities for our students and researchers to get training and experience in the craft and techniques of successful teaching.

This course is intended to - partially - help fill this void. The course is designed for EUI researchers and students who would like to get some training to help them prepare to become successful teachers. We will focus on five areas:

- **Course design.** How do you organize a successful course?
- **Syllabus construction.** How to construct a coherent and useful syllabus?
- **Learning styles and cognition.** Good teaching requires understanding your students and their learning styles. We cannot assume that all students are ‘just like us,’ because they are not.
- **Leading discussion seminars.** Specific focus and training will be devoted to ‘the Socratic method.’ We will also discuss techniques for generating lively discussions; how to deal with ‘troublesome’ students; the gender bias in class seminars.
- **Lecturing.** What makes for successful lectures and how can we improve our lecture style and presentations? We will have a series of sessions devoted to giving participant opportunities to give undergraduate lectures and get specific practical feedback on their lecture style and technique.

This course is obviously NOT intended to provide you all the tools you need to become successful teachers. Instead, I hope that in our sessions the participants will have a better start in developing their own teaching styles and techniques. We will specifically focus on teaching
‘lower division’ college level courses – for this is likely what you will be asked to teach upon entering the job market.

Though we will read some theory on teaching and cognitive learning, the bulk of the course will be focused on giving you practical hands-on advise to help you improve your teaching. Successful teaching is not obvious. It requires thought, preparation and planning. We will spend at least three sessions during the term giving practice mini-lectures, so that we can give each participant some direct feedback on their lecture style and delivery. I expect this course to be highly interactive and involve a great deal of participation from those who do enroll.

If you have taught a course in the past please bring with you copies of the course syllabus you used. If you have not taught a course, but would like to begin building your first syllabus for your future courses, please bring a draft with you. I would like ALL participants to bring a copy of a syllabus from a course they have taken in their undergraduate career. (Ideally, this should be from the course that they found to be particularly stimulating and useful…. But syllabi from particularly bad courses could also be interesting to discuss.)
Week 1 – Thursday 10th January 2013

Introduction: What is a good teacher? What is a good class?

We open the course with a discussion building on each other’s experiences. We’ve all had good teachers, bad teachers, and excellent teachers. What separate these? Why are some courses better than others?

- Preparing a Course → http://teaching.berkeley.edu/ways-make-your-teaching-more-effective
- A compendium of Good Ideas on Teaching → University of Colorado at Boulder (1988), A compendium of Good Ideas on Teaching and Learning
- First day of class: UNC Center for Faculty Excellence (January 2009), The First Day of Class…Your Chance to Make a Good First Impression

Week 2 – Thursday 17th January 2013

Learning Styles and Cognition.

Different classes, and different students require different teaching strategies. A good teacher needs to consider the audience when designing and delivering course materials. It is sometimes difficult for us to remember that not everyone in our course has the passion for our subjects that we do. It is also important to recognize different backgrounds and different intellectual abilities. A great course for one audience could be a disaster for another.

- Learning Styles and Teaching:
  - Grasha, Anthony (1996), Teaching with Style: A practical guide to enhancing learning by understanding teaching & learning styles, Alliance Publishers
  - Pintrich, Paul, Motivation and Classroom Learning

Week 3 – Thursday 24th January 2013 09:00 – 11:00 Seminar Room 2

Leading class discussions – The Socratic Method

There are various types of class discussions. They can be everything from what I call “pulling teeth”, to something like a superficial cocktail party conversation. In my view an excellent class discussion is
guided by the professor, but is open to ideas and input of the students. It is neither a lecture, nor a BS session. The Socratic Method is an excellent way to find the line between these extremes. But it must be done carefully and with considerable preparation.

- The Guided Discussion → Center for Teaching and Learning (1992), *The Guided Discussion*, CTL number 12, February 1992
- The Socratic Method
  → Reich, Rob (2003), *The Socratic Method: What it is and How to Use it in the Classroom*, in *Stanford University Newsletter on Teaching* 13(1), 2003
  → Center for Teaching and Learning (1996), *Relating Student Experience and the Curriculum*, CTL number 17, January 1996
  → Wesson, Marianne (1990), *Use of the Socratic Method*, in *On Teaching*, vol.1, pp.90-99, Mary Ann Shea Editor

**Week 4 – Thursday 31st January 2013**

*Teaching undergraduates. Techniques and tricks.*

What makes a good lecture or lecturer? Is it “entertainment”, or is it simply passing information on to the students? In my view, a good lecturer tries to *engage* the students in the topic. This requires a different approach from presenting a paper at a conference. Secondly, good lecture *style* requires good delivery. We will consider tempo, rhythm, volume as well as substance.

- Lecturing in Large Classes → Center for Teaching and Learning (1989), *Ideas for Teaching Large Lecture Classes, from an interview with Professor David Griffiths*, CTL number 5, October 1989
- Lecture Methods → Center for Teaching and Learning (1989), *Thoughts on the Lecture Method*, CTL number 6, November 1989

**Week 5 – Thursday 7th February**  
*Emeroteca, Badia Fiesolana*

*Lecture Practice I*

For the next three weeks we will each practice giving introductory lectures to the class. Depending on how many students take this class, we should have approximately 20 minutes per presentation, so that everyone in this course will have the opportunity to practice lecturing and get feedback from the group. No matter how good one is in lecturing, one can always improve.

- Brooke Harrington
- Anne Christine Holtmann
Week 6 – Thursday 14th February 2013

Lecture Practice II

- Rebecca Wolffberg

Alternative Teaching Techniques

PREZI, presentations, role plays, debates etc.

- PowerPoint Presentations → Ansell, Ben, Designing Effective Presentations
  → Jagger, Suzy, The How and Why of Debates in Teaching and Assessment

Week 7 – Thursday 21st February 2013

Lecture Practice III

- Céline Colombo
- Johanna Gereke

Week 8 – Wednesday 27th February 2013

Lecture Practice IV

- Tamara Popic
- Saara Hämäläinen
Week 9 – Thursday 28\textsuperscript{th} February 2013

Women as teachers and mentors

- Guest appearance: Prof. Laura Downs (EUI) and Prof. Masha Hedberg (Johns Hopkins University)

Week 10 – Thursday 7\textsuperscript{th} March 2013

09:00 – 11:00 Seminar Room 2

Lecture Practice V

- Furio Stamati
- Daria Popova

Practical details

Recognizing that the participants in this class will go to widely different national educational contexts – each with their own set of expectations – we will try to address some of the basic (and often unpleasant) aspects of teaching.

For example:

- Grading and Administration
- Dealing with the unexpected
- The problem student
- Plagiarism / cheating

Suggested additional readings


Van Emden, Joan (2010), *Presentation Skills for Students*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY; Palgrave Macmillan EUI Library: Book collection (entrance floor) LIB 378.177 VAN


