

WesTeach: An Introduction to Teaching at Wesleyan

Mary Alice Haddad

Director, Office of Faculty and Career Development

email: mahaddad@wesleyan.edu

Jen Rose

Director, Center for Pedagogical Innovation

email: jrose01@wesleyan.edu

Objectives:

This course is designed to help new faculty get up to speed in Wesleyan's classrooms. Through discussions, exercises, guest speakers, peer observations, and videos, we will be gaining insight into ways to improve our teaching and reflect critically on our own performance in the classroom. This course is designed to facilitate the selection of appropriate instructional tools and teaching styles for your course, and to develop strategies of analysis and evaluation to help determine teaching effectiveness. In addition to professionalizing performance in the classroom, this course is intended to help develop the habit of reflecting on teaching to promote ongoing development and improvement. We hope that by the end of the quarter, not only will you find teaching enjoyable and fulfilling, but you will also have developed patterns of ongoing critical thinking about teaching. In this way, we will set in motion a continual process that will allow you to grow as a teacher throughout your career.

Expectations:

There are hopes rather than expectations for this course. Since everyone in the group is, by definition, a new faculty member, we recognize that you have a lot on your plate. The hope is that regular participation in this class will alleviate rather than add to that burden.

The sessions will generally be divided into two parts, with the first part tackling the topic for the day and the second part offering an opportunity to share challenges/triumphs/laughs that occurred during the week and gain assistance when requested.

We will all be part of a Microsoft Team, which will allow everyone to connect with one another, chat offline, and exchange files.

Assignments:

All reading is optional. However, as with all classes, the more that people participate, the better the individual and collective experience will be. We hope that you'll make an effort to come to as many sessions as you can.

There will be four outside-of-class assignments that are encouraged.

1. Peer Observation—observe one of your peers, be observed, and discuss your findings with each other.
2. Lecture/class Observation—observe one or more of the senior faculty members in your department/division with an eye towards figuring out what was working pedagogically for that faculty member and how you might replicate it in your own class(es).
3. Syllabus—develop a syllabus for one of your spring classes, exchange it with one of the people from this group, and share constructive feedback.
4. Reflection—Immediately at the end of the semester take a couple of minutes to write down

what worked and what didn't, so you can improve the next time you teach the class.

- Week 1**
Sept. 4 **Introduction—Setting the tone**
During this section we will spend some time talking about how the first week of class went. We will go over ways to facilitate class discussion, including review of Bloom's taxonomy and other strategies of asking effective questions and listening to student responses.
- Week 2**
Sept. 11 **Facilitating active learning— polling, small discussion groups, debates, simulations, project-based learning, movement workshops, asynchronous online interactions, etc.**
We will discuss several effective ways to facilitate active learning in the classroom in small and large classes
- Week 3**
Sept. 18 **Lecturing and Learning Styles**
There are many different styles of lecturing and presenting information. The choice of a lecturing style depends on your personality as well as the type of information you wish to convey. Each has its own tradeoffs.
- Week 4**
Sept. 25 **Cultivating Wesleyan as an antiracist community—inclusive classrooms, diverse faculty, valuing everyone—** Alison Williams, VP for Equity and Inclusion
Alison Williams, VP for Equity and Inclusion will help us learn about the challenges facing some of our students, the dangers of implicit bias, macroaggressions, and other things we should avoid doing in our teaching, as well as offering techniques for building a safe, welcoming community in our classroom. She will also address how we can move these antiracist behaviors beyond our classrooms into our offices, our hallways, and our professional gatherings.
- Week 5**
Oct. 2 **Challenges in the classroom—the silent class, the domineering student, the hostile student, etc.**
We will discuss several of the biggest challenges that we face in the classroom and discuss practical ways to overcome them.
- Week 6**
Oct. 9 **Skill development—writing, presentations, public speaking, etc.** Lauren Silber, Shapiro Writing Center; Jeffrey Goetz, CPI
In this session we'll discuss how we help students develop a variety of transferrable skills while also teaching the content of our course. How can we integrate skill development into courses in meaningful ways.
- Week 7**
Oct. 16 **Assessment—evaluating student knowledge and understanding.** Amy Grillo, College of Education Studies
What are our goals in assessing student learning? Are we designing our assessments to be formative (shaping and informing ongoing instruction) or summative (used to determine whether a student has met certain criteria, or used to rank/compare student performance), or some of both? We'll explore ways to align assessments with course goals, make them fair and accessible

to all students, and think beyond just tests and papers.

Week 8

Oct. 23

Peer observation of teaching

We will engage in a conversation about what we've learned from observing the teaching of our peers and the lectures of other faculty in our department. We will discuss how we can incorporate what we've learned to improve our teaching.

Week 9

Oct. 30

Technology in the Classroom—How technology can enhance student learning

We will discuss several technical tools that can enhance student learning, the “flipped classroom,” and ways to transition a zoom class

Week 10

Nov. 6

Understanding teaching evaluations—How to read the evaluations, how Advisory reads them, how to use them to improve your teaching

Teaching evaluations are imperfect measures of the quality of teaching, but they can offer useful insights into our teaching and how to improve. This session will focus on how to read the forms that we get, how they are read by Advisory, and how to glean useful information from the student feedback.

Week 11

Nov. 13

Building a career that you love

It is easy to become overwhelmed with our obligations and goals as a faculty member. In this session we'll hear from a few faculty about how they manage to balance the three canonical areas needed for tenure (scholarship, teaching, collegueship) and finding a way to develop a workstyle that allows for good work-life balance (at least most of the time), having a family, socializing, exercising, hobbies, etc.

Nov. 20, 27

Week 12

Dec. 4

Two WEEKS OFF –Thanksgiving

Wrapping up and reflection—How did it go? How to improve?

This session will offer a chance to reflect on the semester and help build a habit of reflection and improvement, focusing particularly on which areas of our teaching have improved, which areas we still need to improve, and how we intend to address those areas.

Week 13

THURSDA

Y Dec.

10 !!!!

Syllabus Development

Before you design your course, you have to develop a philosophy of teaching which will guide both the material you present and the style of presentation. As you begin to design the syllabus, focus on the learning goals and ensure that all parts of the course are integrated, connecting back to those goals.