

## Teaching Reflections Fall 2015

All in all, a good semester. I found the students particularly engaged this year and to be honest, really forced me to “pick up my game”. (I am looking at you Soci 100A01 and the lectures around sexuality 😊)

Some of the things that went particularly well this term included:

- Using CourseSpaces to collect grades across TAs/Tutorials. This went very well. Yes, a few bumps, but it is definitely the way to go.
- I had the sense that most TAs got with the program pretty quickly. This was no doubt because I had many returning TAs this semester.
- As is the case with most semesters, students continue to perceive our grading standards as too high (which I believe is both a legitimate concern for them but also a conscious decision of mine). I want the exams to be “hard” to students because my experience suggests students learn more sociology when they feel “pushed”. As long as students are getting A’s I am confident the exam standards are achievable and reasonable.
- Over the holidays I worked with a couple of senior TAs to re-work the tutorial assignments. I think our revisions will make the process more clear to students and I think will improve the product generated.
- My course evaluations continue to reinforce that students enjoy my lectures and my passion for sociology.

Some of the things that I continue to struggle with, and will continue to work on, include:

- While peerScholar was an interesting exercise, I decided to stop using it. Besides some systemic problems with the software the providers could not address, I am not convinced anonymous peer review is possible for Intro students. This is not because they are incapable, in fact some students offered truly insightful critiques, and the fact remains that the majority of students “skated” through the exercises. I do not feel confident that using student assessment for grades at this level is the most appropriate strategy.
- I would like to find some online tool/experience that I can have students use that is sociologically relevant, easy to use, and both cost and time effective.
- I still have some TAs that are not as committed as I would like. This, no doubt, is partly due to their own coursework and commitments, but I still feel badly for those students who are not as engaged by their TA as is possible. Not sure I can ever do anything about this, but, I will keep trying (perhaps I should consider more TA training?)

I think that the changes we have made for this semester (dropping peerScholar and improving the tutorial assignments) will make substantive improvements to our program.

Fall 2015 was another solid term for me and the vast majority of the TAs. Yes, there is more work to do but we are definitely moving in the right direction.