

Teaching Reflections Spring 2019

A very good semester but one that had a few bumps along the way.

Some of the things that went well last semester were:

- Tutorial attendance increased now that we are giving 10% participation grades. While I originally did not want to reward students for attending what I hope would be worth coming to, I appreciate that the change was needed.
- Deleting the writing assignment for this semester worked for the majority of students. While some mentioned to me that they like having to write in Soci 100, I reminded them that they still had the Option 2.
- Reviewing the exam questions with the TAs I think helped them get up to speed with what I was looking for that went beyond my MP3 notes, etc.
- I was (again) impressed (and gratified) that classroom attendance stayed so high, throughout the semester, even though I record and post all lectures.
- The TAs were a great group this semester and I had relatively little “drama” to deal with.
- My 438 class were, once again, a committed and wonderful group to work with.

Some of the things that I need to continue to work on are:

- Intro students were more frustrated than usual with variation between TAs. While I know that some TAs are more demanding than others, they were very consistent with their grading and there were no significant statistical differences between them. However, what we have decided to do for next year is to have a specific tutorial devoted to writing exams – that are not focused on the actual midterm questions. Hopefully, by helping them understand the process of writing exams without the pressure of the exam, will help students understand what we are looking for and what “going beyond the content” actually looks like (we will provide sample exams from previous students).
- I felt I was overly flexible with the 438 class on what we covered in seminars. Next year I will focus on fewer readings but going into more depth. I feel a little guilty that they may not really have a good sense of what Applied Sociology actually is. Also, I am going to try and implement a pass/fail or complete/incomplete for the final project – they are simply too difficult to define a rubric that let’s the students know what I am looking for across the incredibly diverse types of projects.

A great semester. My thanks to all my students and TAs who made the semester such a pleasure.

/Bruce