

## **GSTTS Seminar 1 - Summary**

Today's topic was "Preparing for Class", and the goal was to cover lecture/recitation preparation and go over strategies for writing and giving quizzes. We started class off with a Q&A session to get everyone comfortable and gauge how many felt in their first outings as TAs. A common thread of questions emerged, *essentially* on how to stand in front of a class and do a good job, e.g.,

- What do I do if students aren't driving the recitation with questions?
- How should I present the material in a lecture?

In lieu of addressing those questions straight away, we opened by answering some other basic questions they had to break the ice and get things moving. Afterwards, we had the tables discuss how things went on their first day, which generated a bit of discussion. We then moved into having them focus back on the group to talk about good/bad qualities they've seen in instructors of theirs. We wrote these on the board and talked about them for a minute or two, really just mentioning which of them we'd address today and which would come up again in future seminars.

We started talking about presentation by going over how to budget time; in particular, we mentioned the 20 hours TA weekly time limit and talked about how to allocate time to each of their respective duties. Next, we moved onto specifics. We started this by talking about what materials to draw from in writing lecture notes or devising a recitation plan, such as skimming the relevant book sections, and old HWs/exams. In creating the notes, we stressed the importance of good example selection, organization, pacing, and the presentation. We gave some examples of our own practices and class experiences as examples.

Lastly, we moved on to some considerations for writing quizzes. There was nothing definitive here. Our goal was to just to present some viewpoints and allow the TAs to think about them and reasoning behind them. The major points here were

- consider carefully the difficulty you choose for your quizzes in relation to the other assignments
- consider the pros and cons of quizzes in the beginning vs end of class
- consider what the goal of a quiz is and choose questions that adhere to that goal (such as building confidence, preparing for the exam, etc.)

## **GSTTS Seminar 1 - Reflection**

This first session was a little rough around the edges. It felt like we spent the entire time in front of a class writing on a board and lecturing, and not quite as much time getting the TAs to open up. Though, in some sense, this seemed unavoidable; for many, this is their first time preparing to be in front of a class in a leadership position, so they didn't have much experience to draw from and communicate to others. In addition, a large percentage of this year's cohort are

graders, and this seminar wasn't immediately relevant to them. Even so, it felt like a torrent of information was thrown their way in too short a period of time.

Looking back, there are some things we can do differently to get conversation to flow more freely. The biggest thing to try is to stand in front of them less and sit amongst them more, as then, hopefully, we'll not be seen as instructors so much as mentors driving the conversation and sharing of ideas and experiences. Also, the groups were too large and this didn't foster individual engagement as much as groups of two or three would (we had groups of five).