

## **Chapter Three**

### **Sample Workshops for New GSIs**

This chapter offers suggestions of activities and workshops that can be incorporated into a new GSI Orientation, workshop or course. As noted in Chapter One, it is helpful to keep in mind the developmental stages of GSIs, and that new GSIs' key questions about teaching include issues such as time management, what to do on the first day, authority issues, and support resources (Nyquist & Sprague, 1998). This chapter contains descriptions of several workshops you might offer, including:

- Sessions on the first days of teaching
  - Constructing a first day of class handout
  - Ways to get to know students
  - Lesson planning
  - Practice teaching
- Handling tricky situations that arise in office hours
- Grading
- Time management and working in administrative teams
- Teaching critical thinking

#### *First Days Workshops*

Assisting graduate student instructors in preparing for the first day of class is an essential part of a teaching program. Several departments at the University of Michigan have creative ways to help their GSIs prepare for the first day. In German, for example, a faculty member speaks Italian to demonstrate the first day of an introductory language class. This helps the new instructors "feel" what it is like to be a student in a language class for the first time, and gives them a concrete model of the first day to analyze and discuss.

Some of the topics that might be covered in a session on the first day of class include:

- Goals for the first day
- What students expect of U-M GSIs
- How to best set the tone for the semester
- How best to communicate essential course information
- Ways to learn about students
- Instructional strategies to communicate course content effectively and get students actively involved
- How to use CTools and Wolverine Access

### ***First-Day-of-Class Handout***

What a GSI hands out on the first day will be determined by how her or his section fits into the course. If it is a section (discussion section, lab section, etc.) connected with a lecture, the handout should complement the course syllabus. If the GSIs are teaching sections that are fairly independent, they will need models for a more comprehensive syllabus. Requiring GSIs to develop a first-day-of-class handout before classes begin and giving them feedback on the handout can help them make course expectations clear to students and also help them avoid making several mistakes (making pejorative statements, setting rules that are not useful, having too much of an open-door policy for office hours, etc.). Many departments create a useful workshop by having GSIs bring drafts of their first-day handout to circulate and get peer feedback. The *GSI Guidebook* (see [http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi\\_guide.html](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi_guide.html)) has several models of course, section and lab syllabi that can serve as resources.

### ***Getting to Know Students***

One of GSIs' biggest contributions to undergraduate education is helping to personalize learning for students: getting to know who the students are and their individual capabilities and giving them individual feedback on their work. Since GSIs teach small sections, they are also in a position to get students actively involved and thinking about the material through discussion, small group work, in-class writing assignments, etc. To make this kind of teaching successful, it is essential that instructors get to know students very quickly and facilitate activities that will help students get to know each other.

Some departmental programs include a demonstration of different methods for getting students acquainted with each other and with the course content. Figure 3.1 lists some sample activities. These demonstrations give new instructors a chance to participate in an activity that they, in turn, can facilitate with their students. In the process, they will get acquainted with other new instructors in the department.

#### **Figure 3.1: Icebreakers**

**Lisa Fein, graduate student, Department of Sociology, and Tomomi Yamaguchi, graduate student, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan**

Icebreakers can be a good way to help you learn about your students, reduce anxiety, and introduce students to the course content. Below are some examples of general and course related icebreakers. Feel free to adapt them to suit your needs or create your own. Although icebreakers are often used in the first days of class, they can be useful throughout the semester. If a student says a couple of words in front of the class in the beginning of a section meeting, she or he will be more likely to participate during the session.

**GENERAL ICEBREAKERS:**

- Students introduce themselves and answer a question about themselves. For example, you might ask them to state their hometowns, favorite television programs, what they did (or wish they did) over break, etc. I sometimes ask about the best and worst items in the cafeteria.
- Divide the class into pairs. Each person talks about him/herself to the other, sometimes with specific instructions to share a certain piece of information. For example, “The one thing I am particularly proud of is...” After five minutes, the participants introduce the other person to the rest of the class.
- Students introduce themselves and tell what they know about why they have their name (their mother wanted to name them after great aunt Helen who once climbed Pike’s Peak in high heels, etc.)
- Have students come up with 3 statements about themselves, two that are true and one that is false. Have them introduce themselves, give their statements and have people guess which one is false. (You may want to set some sort of limit on what kind of information is disclosed. Might not be appropriate in all classes)
- Divide the class into groups of four. Explain to the groups that they must come up with five things they all have in common. The only restriction is that the students can’t use school or work related items.

**COURSE CONTENT ICEBREAKERS:**

- Write a provocative question regarding the course content on the board/overhead. Have students discuss it in small groups (3-5) and then as a whole class. Relate this question back to what students will be studying during the semester.
- Select a key word from the course title and have students do an “association exercise” by reporting what first comes to mind. Record answers on the chalkboard/overhead and use these to give an overview of the course.
- Prepare a short true/false quiz on topics that will come up in the course. Include questions that don’t have real true/false answers and will elicit discussion. Have students complete alone, then get into smaller groups to discuss them. Once one group is done, start discussion with entire class.
- If you are going to have your students set up study groups, divide up the class (for instance by times they are available for out-of-class study) and have people exchange names/phone numbers. Get them working together on a problem with the course material, and have members of the group report back to the class, write on board, etc.
- Have students create sentences regarding the course material by asking each successive student to contribute one word to the sentence. You might start the exercise with a word/name from the course and then let the students take over.

### ***Lesson Planning***

Many departments incorporate lesson planning into their new GSI training, often in conjunction with a practice teaching session (see below). Sample lesson planning activities and workshops are provided here in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

#### **Figure 3.2: Prof. María de Lourdes Dorantes, Spanish Program, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan**

##### PLANNING THE LESSON

Systematic preparation of each day's lesson is essential to the smooth functioning of the class. Too often teaching is seen as going from one item on a checklist to another, with little thought given to continuity or follow-up.

In your lesson planning, take the following factors into consideration:

**WARM-UP** Always begin your class with a 5-minute warm up. This should always involve material that students have studied already. You can do a warm-up by simply having short conversations with students as they enter the class, by a personalized (not personal) question/answer segment, by having students talk to each other while they circulate around the room (give them precise instructions on what they should do), or by participating in small-group conversations.

**ATTITUDE** Always have a positive attitude toward students, the textbook, your role, visual aids, activities, etc. **DO NOT** speak against the textbook or about the exercises, material or work you need to do in class. **DO NOT** speak against the language requirement. Help students understand why learning a foreign language can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Much of this will communicate itself to them if you are energetic and enthusiastic about what you do.

**TARGET LANGUAGE USE** Use Spanish as much as possible during the class period. English should be the exception and should be used only when absolutely necessary. Don't allow students to develop the habit of translation. **YOU** are the only live model the students have.

**USE OF BOOK** Don't bury your nose in the textbook. Place activities on **INDEX CARDS** or on **TRANSPARENCIES**. The text should serve two purposes: 1) general guide and reference, 2) homework assignments and home use by the students. You should have your hands free in order to use gestures, and students should be looking at you, not at the textbook, unless the activity is a task that requires them to read the material in the book. Most classroom activities can and **SHOULD** be conducted with books closed. Get them used to this from the very beginning.

**VARIETY** Incorporate different types of activities. Try not to spend more than 10-15 minutes on any one activity, including any quizzes. This is especially important at the first and second levels of language study when the attention span of students is highly reduced. In going from one activity to another, try not to repeat the same **TYPE** of activity even though the content may

\* You should have at least 3 different activities per class period, preferably more if some activities last less than 5 minutes or so. Moving from one grammar point to another grammar point does not constitute variety.

\* Pacing: Vary your pacing from one activity to another. Alternate between slower moving activities and more rapidly paced activities.

MOVEMENT Each class period should include at least one activity where students have to get out of their chairs and move around the room.

GROUP WORK Make frequent use of small-group/pair activities.

TRANSITIONS Build transitions into the lesson plan. Smooth transitions from one activity to another are crucial to the cohesion and coherence of the lesson. Until you've learned to make transitions automatically, plan them ahead of time. Helpful hint: the easiest transition is to use the last element of one teaching segment as the first element of the next segment.

BLACKBOARD USE Use the blackboard judiciously. Don't write everything you say on the board. Avoid reproducing on the board something that the students can refer to in the book while studying at home, such as verb paradigm, or a list of adjectives.

VISUALS Use visual materials whenever possible (video, transparencies, slides, magazines, etc.).

DON'T TEACH SITTING DOWN You should always move around the room, in the front and on the sides, even in the back. Try to move as close as possible to the students whom you are addressing.

\* CAUTION: Students should be relaxed, not frantic and tension-ridden. Moving around does not necessarily mean tension. Neither should the students be so relaxed that the purpose of the activity is misdirected. Know why you are doing that particular activity and what the expected outcomes are, and keep it focused for the students.

ERROR CORRECTION Know when to correct students and when to leave them alone to communicate ideas. Correct them when you are doing more structured activities; let them talk when the activities are open-ended.

IMPORTANT Teach students how to ask questions as well as answer them.

WIND DOWN Always end the class with a 3- to 5-minute wind-down so that students leave the class in an "up" mood, not with the memory of having made mistakes. Never end the class at a point when students are struggling.

## LESSON PLAN WORKSHEET

Course:

Date:

1. Lesson Topic(s):
2. Lesson Goal:
3. Lesson Objectives (for students):
4. Rationale for the lesson:
5. Procedures:
  - a. Focusing event, advanced organizer, or problem:
  - b. Instructional methods:
  - c. Student participation (groupings?):
  - d. Check for understanding:
  - e. Concluding wrap-up:
6. Materials and aids:
7. Assignments for lesson:
8. Follow-up assignments:
9. Content outline:

**Figure 3.3: Department of Political Science, University of Michigan**

## Lesson Plan Worksheet

Lesson Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Question</b>	<b>Things to Think About</b>	<b>Planning Notes</b>
<b>WHAT</b>	Developing Lesson Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What should the students learn?</li> <li>● What should they know or be able to do by the end of class?</li> <li>● How would you want students to answer the question: “What was the one thing you got out of this discussion?”</li> </ul>	
<b>WHY</b>	Reflecting on Lesson Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In what way do goals fit into the course as a whole?</li> <li>● Why should students care/be interested/be motivated?</li> </ul>	
<b>HOW</b>	Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How will you accomplish these goals?</li> <li>● What questions will you ask? When?</li> <li>● What activities will you use?</li> </ul>	

### ***Practice Teaching***

The process of practice teaching is also known as *microteaching*<sup>1</sup>. As the name indicates, it is a process in which instructors practice their teaching in a safe environment. The goal is to give instructors confidence, support, and feedback by letting them try out a short slice of what they plan to do with their students. Ideally, the sessions take place before the first day of class and are videotaped for review individually with an experienced teaching consultant. The process is a quick, efficient, and proven way to help teachers gain confidence about their ability to teach.

At the U-M there are different enactments of practice teaching (e.g., ELI 994, Engineering GSI Orientation, university-wide teaching orientation, departments have their own versions of practice teaching) but all have the same basic format: a small group of people meet together, each person delivers a small presentation and then gets oral feedback from the participants to improve the presentation. A facilitator is needed to help the group through the process.

The facilitation process is crucial for the success of the practice teaching. CRLT follows a model by which we start looking for the positive moves, and then we focus on areas that could be improved. The facilitator asks the presenter his or her impressions before asking the audience to give theirs.

In more detail, the process is as follows:

1. The practice teacher gives a sample lesson (ranging from 5-20 minutes) while all the participants observe and take notes.
2. If videotape is used, the group watches the tape for a few minutes.
3. The facilitator gives the “class” a few minutes to write down notes about the session. It can be useful to provide a form for taking notes. (CRLT can provide sample forms.)
4. After these are completed, the facilitator gathers the group and starts by asking the presenter what he or she thought *went well* in the presentation. After this, the facilitator turns to the class and asks what they thought went well about the explanation.
5. After either everybody has spoken or there are no more points to add, the facilitator turns back to the presenter and asks what he or she *would do differently* if given the opportunity. After the presenter has talked about what could be improved, turn to the class and ask their input about areas for improvement. When there are no more points to add (or due to time constraints), move to the next presenter.

Practice teaching sessions can be easily modified to fit a department’s training program. Some possible variants are:

- Length of the presentation (5 - 20 minutes)
- Number of people in the room (4 - 8 people although 4-5 is optimal)

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard, available at <http://www.bokcenter.harvard.edu/docs/microteaching.html>

- When the feedback is given: after each presentation or after all the presentations are given
- Videotaping: with or without
- When the tape is watched: during the session by all participants; after the session individually, or with the facilitator only
- Written feedback: collected or not
- Focus of feedback

Practice teaching sessions are offered for all GSIs at the Engineering and University-wide GSI Orientations (see Chapter Two for agendas). If a department wishes to construct its own practice teaching program, CRLT offers a training session for GSMs and faculty titled, “Running Practice Teaching Sessions.” (See <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsmgsicoordprog.html> for more information about this program.)

### ***Teaching in Office Hours***

Office hours are an instructional context where difficult-to-navigate issues can arise: questions about grades, students’ personal issues, and students’ difficulty with course material. As a result, one-to-one teaching is an excellent topic for a GSI workshop. Figure 3.4 offers a sample outline for such a workshop, and Figure 3.5 offers additional office hours scenarios for discussion. Additional resources can be found in the *GSI Guidebook* (see “Learning and Teaching in Office Hours” at [http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi\\_guide.html](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi_guide.html)).

#### **Figure 3.4: CRLT, University of Michigan**

##### **Handling Difficult Situations in Office Hours**

Studies on the effects of college on students indicate that individual contact between students and teachers outside of the classroom has a significant impact on students. Office hours are the most likely venue for this informal contact. Students may go to office hours for a variety of reasons: to ask specific questions about the material, to gain clarification about an assignment, to protest a grade, to discuss the material in more depth, or even to discuss personal problems. To be effective, GSIs need to be aware of these possibilities and have a chance to think about and practice office hour situations.

##### **Goal**

To give GSIs practice thinking about and responding to situations that have (and will) come up in office hours.

##### **Policies and Resources**

First, it would be useful for departments to give GSIs some general guidelines for office hours.

- How many hours a week they are expected to hold office hours
- Where each GSI will have office space
- What resources are available to help students with difficult problems. Section One of the *GSI Guidebook* (see [http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi\\_guide.html](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi_guide.html)) contains a list and description of resources GSIs might find helpful. You can get more information to hand out to GSIs from the offices themselves, and some of these groups (e.g., Counseling and Psychological Services) may be willing to send representatives to talk to GSIs.

*Discussion of why students do (do not) attend office hours.*

- Hand out the sheet labeled: Opinions of GSI Office Hours (found directly following the explanation of this activity). Give GSIs 5 minutes to generate answers to the two questions: 1) What do you think is the main purpose of office hours? 2) Think of your experience as a student. What are some reasons you have gone or would go to a GSI's office hours? What are some reasons you would not go?
- Give GSIs 5 minutes to compare their answers in groups.
- Have groups report on the results of their discussions. Ask groups what they listed as reasons they would or would not go to office hours. Keep a running list on the blackboard
- This might be a time for experienced GSIs to discuss what they have noticed about who comes to office hours, why, and how you can encourage more students to show up.

*Introduce the scenarios.*

Tell GSIs they will have a chance now to think about and discuss a number of scenarios that reflect concerns, complaints, and issues that students bring to GSIs in office hours. The purpose of these discussions is to think about these issues before they arise and develop strategies for dealing with the issues. There will not often be one "correct" way to respond.

*Have GSIs work with the scenarios.*

This activity can be done in one of two ways.

1. Discussion. Choose the scenarios that seem most relevant. Split the GSIs into groups, and give each group one or two vignettes to work on. They could brainstorm solutions and choose the most effective or they could simply discuss the scenario and come up with a variety of ways of handling the situation.
2. Have GSIs role play the scenarios. Choose the ones that seem most appropriate and have GSI volunteers play them out. (You might consider using experienced GSIs to role-play the student part, since they have dealt with these types of issues and might have a more realistic sense of how students might react). After the role-play, get some feedback from the actors. Those who played the GSIs could discuss how they decided to approach the

situation, how it felt when actually talking to the student, what surprises they encountered, and what they might do differently. The student players could talk about how the GSIs' reactions and questions made them feel, how well resolved the issue was for them by the time the role play ended, and what suggestions they might have based on the role play. Next, you can open up the discussion to the whole group. Remind the group that the point is not to critique the performance, but to get their input. Which approaches would they feel comfortable using? What other ways would they suggest for approaching the issue?

### Scenarios

This collection is by no means exhaustive. You may wish to write up scenarios based on your own experience. Similarly, you could ask experienced GSIs to contribute vignettes based on difficult or common situations that they have had to confront.

1. I'm not doing very well in this course. I'm really worried because I'm on academic probation and I need a 'B' in this course to maintain my academic eligibility. Is there something I could do to earn extra credit, maybe a short research paper, or read an extra book? I'll do anything to get a 'B' in this course.
2. Would it be possible to get a two-week extension for turning in my term paper? I know I waited until the last minute to make this request, but I was hoping I would be able to get the paper in on time. My parents are in the process of getting a divorce and it's been causing me a lot of emotional problems and stress. I've been going home very weekend to be with my younger brother and sister to help them cope with their feelings about my parents' divorce, and that has taken up a lot of time that I would have otherwise been able to devote to my schoolwork.
3. I was really disappointed with my grade on the midterm exam. And I'm worried about how well I will do on the final exam. I attended all the classes. I took detailed notes, and I carefully read all the assigned readings. How can I do better on the final exam? What do you suggest that I do differently?
4. Would it be possible for me to take the final exam in this course earlier than officially scheduled? I'm going to Cancun, Mexico, for the Christmas holiday and if I can leave by a certain date the airfare will be much less expensive. Unfortunately, the exam for this course is the very last day of the examination period, and if I have to stay until then, I won't be able to take advantage of the lower airfare.
5. I've been trying to think of a topic for the research paper you assigned but I just can't come up with anything. This is my first course in \_\_\_\_\_ and I don't know anything about the subject matter that we are covering in this course. Also, I have never had to write a research paper before. The only papers that I have written are the short paper assignments we had in English 124. I don't know where to start. What should I do?

6. I'm sorry to call you at home, but I wanted to tell you why I missed the hour exam this morning. I studied late into the night for the exam and set the alarm clock for 7:00 a.m. But I was so exhausted that I didn't hear the alarm and overslept. By the time I got up it was already too late to get to class to take the midterm. Would it be possible for me to take a make-up exam?
7. I was really disappointed in the grade I received on this paper. I rewrote it several times before turning in the final version. I've always had difficulty expressing myself clearly in writing no matter how hard I try or how many times I rewrite the paper. The last version just never comes out well. I just don't know what to do.
8. I just transferred to U of M from Washtenaw Community College. I'm having a very difficult time here. The amount of reading I have to do in one course is more than I had to do in all the courses I took during a semester at Washtenaw. And this place is so big, classes are so large, I feel that nobody knows me or cares about me. I can't get to know any of the teachers. I'm doing poorly in all of my classes. No matter how hard I work, my grades on exams are very low. I just don't know what to do. I'm afraid that I will flunk out of UM.
9. I read your comments on my exam and I feel that you graded me unfairly. I think you have a prejudiced point of view and you didn't like my answer because it didn't agree with your prejudices. I feel that your grading was extremely subjective. I think that I have a right to protest your grade and to have the grade changed.
10. Maybe I shouldn't say this, but I often feel that when I attend lecture the professor makes sexist/racist remarks that have no place in a college classroom. I'm not sure if Professor Thompson does this consciously or deliberately, but it's very irritating and offensive to me personally. I have thought about saying something to him but I'm afraid this might affect my grade in the course. What do you think I should do?
11. I'm having trouble with my lab partner. He never reads the manual before he comes to lab, so I end up doing all the work. He either stands and watches, or he tries to help, and just messes things up because he's not prepared. I don't think it's fair that I do all the work, but he gets to use the results and he gets credit for the experiment.
12. I have a question about how you graded my lab report. You gave me a 'C' even though I got the right results. That doesn't seem fair to me. I think the things you took off points for were really picky. Why do I have to spend all this time discussing my results? I thought the main point was to get the experiment to turn out right, not to learn how to write better. This isn't an English course.
13. I'm having a lot of trouble with the problem set this week. I understand it when the professor does the problems on the board in class. I even write down all the solutions so I can use them to study from. But when I get home and try to do the problems in the book, my notes don't seem to help. Could you show me how to do #14? I think it would help if I saw how it's supposed to be done.

**Figure 3.5: Prof. Helene Neu, French Program, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan**

**OFFICE HOUR SCENARIOS**

The following are some situations, which you, as an instructor, may encounter and to which you will need to know how to respond appropriately. While these may not all be typical occurrences, they do reflect some actual experiences here at the University of Michigan. Read each scenario and think how you might respond or act, based on knowledge of the responsibilities of instructors in the elementary language program and of coordinators.

1. **WORRIED ABOUT GRADE IN CLASS.** I know I'm not doing very well in this course. I'm really worried because I'm on academic probation and I need a "B" in this course to stay in school. Is there something I can do to earn extra credit? Or maybe you can let me take some old tests to make up for my bad grades on the two we've already had?
2. **SURPRISED (DISAPPOINTED) ABOUT GRADE ON TEST.** I'm really depressed about my grade on the hourly exam you just returned. I mean, I attend all the classes and I do all the homework. Up until now, I thought I was doing fine; my grades on the "contrôles" were fine. I really studied hard for the exam and I still got a lousy grade. I just don't get it; it seems like there's no relation between the amount of time I spend studying and the grades I get. What can I do to improve?
3. **COMPLAINT ABOUT GRADING.** I don't know why you took off so many points for accents and spelling on this test. I can't spell right in English, so why is spelling such a big deal in French? And besides, someone I know in another section showed me her test; she had a lot more spelling and accent mistakes than I did, but her teacher didn't take off nearly as many points as you did. It's not fair.
4. **CAN I TAKE THE TEST EARLY?** I know there's a test this Friday, but I've got a problem. My brother is getting married this weekend and my ride is leaving Ann Arbor before class, at noon, so I won't be able to make it to class to take the test. What can I do?

Would your answer be any different if – instead of a wedding – the student had told you he had a toothache and the only time he could get an appointment to see the dentist was on Friday and so he would be missing class? (Explain.)

5. **STUDENT MISSED THE TEST.** (Student calls you at home Friday evening; the test was that day.) I'm sorry to call you at home, but I wanted to tell you why I missed the test this morning. I studied almost all night for the test, but then, I overslept and when I woke up it was already too late to make it to class for the test. Can you give me a make-up exam?

Would your answer be any different if the student overslept for the final exam and called you in your office later in the day?

6. **AN INVITATION.** I really like your class and I think you're a great teacher. You said you like jazz. Well, I've got two tickets for a great concert next weekend and wondered if you'd like to go out with me? It would be a lot of fun and it would give us a chance to get to know each other better.
7. **LEARNING DISABILITY.** I didn't really want to say anything, but I did so poorly on the first test that I guess I need to let you know that I have a learning disability. In high school, I always got extra time to take tests; it looks like I'll need that here, too? Is that okay?
8. **SUSPECTED CHEATING ON A WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT.** As you (the teacher) are grading writing assignments turned in by your students, you come across one paper that is amazingly well written. In fact, it is so much better than what you have seen so far of this student's work that you suspect him of cheating. How would you handle this situation?
9. **UNHAPPY WITH GRADE RECEIVED ON AN ASSIGNMENT; GOING TO ANOTHER TEACHER.** Could you read this paper and tell me what grade you would give it if I were in your class?

Would you respond any differently if the student had been in your class last semester and had added: "I always got A's on my writing when I was in your class and I get a C on my first paper in GSI Jones' class?"

## Grading

Workshops on grading can be immensely valuable for new GSIs, by helping GSIs spend their time more efficiently, enhancing student assessment, and reducing student complaints. Figure 3.6 offers a sample workshop for grading lab reports, although the format easily can be modified for other types of student work, such as papers. Useful resources in the *GSI Guidebook* ([http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi\\_guide.html](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi_guide.html)) include:

- Improving Multiple Choice Questions
- Ten Simple Strategies for Grading Student Writing
- Commenting Effectively on Student Writing
- Grades at U-M
- Academic Integrity in the Classroom

### **Figure 3.6: Engineering Teaching Consultants, CRLT, University of Michigan Workshop on Grading**

- 1. Introductions (5 minutes)**
  - a. Facilitator introduction
  - b. Workshop preview
  - c. Poll participating GSIs
    - i. How many of you will be grading yourself?
    - ii. How many of you will have graders?
    - iii. How many of you will be grading lab reports?
    - iv. How many of you will be using auto-grader?
- 2. Answer Key Exercise (20 minutes)**
  - a. Grade a sample assignment in groups of 2 – 4 people (10 min)
  - b. Summarize groups' grading totals and strategies on the board (10 min)
- 3. “Burning” Grading Questions (5 minutes)**
- 4. Our Strategies for Grading Lab Reports (10 minutes)**
- 5. Grading Issues Presentation (10 minutes)**
  - a. Life with graders (5 min)
  - b. Life without graders (5 min)

Note: The time division between two parts of the presentation will be adjusted based on the majority of GSIs' responsibilities
- 6. Questions and Handout Summary (5 minutes)**

***Time Management and Working with GSI-Faculty Teams***

GSI-faculty working relationships and time management issues are often salient concerns for new GSIs. Figure 3.7 offers a workshop example that addresses these two intertwined issues through case studies. For additional resources, see *Teaching effectively with GSI-Faculty teams* (available: <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/occasional.html>).

**Figure 3.7: Laura Potter and Andrea Benjamin, Graduate Student Mentors,  
Department of Political Science, University of Michigan**

**Time Management and Teamwork Workshop**

1. Welcome: Any concerns, comments, questions? (10 minutes)
2. Teamwork (25 minutes)
  - a. Discussion of why teamwork is important for all GSIs. Discussion of teamwork challenges? (5 minutes)
  - b. 3 Case Studies. Have students divide up into groups and discuss in small groups. Then larger group. (20 minutes)
    - i. GSI who wants to follow his/her own lesson plans
    - ii. GSI who is a little too helpful to own students before exam
    - iii. GSI not carrying own weight
3. Time Management (15 minutes)
  - a. Challenges?
  - b. Advice from group?
  - c. Balancing life as a student and GSI as end of term nears, how to grade papers, exams, and complete own assignments.
  - d. Tips handout
4. Break (5 minutes)
5. Demands from Professors (15 minutes)
  - a. Remember to track hours. You should know how many hours a week you work. If a Professor is asking you to do more, talk to your AA or fellow GSIs to see if you are the only one feeling that way.
  - b. Talk to the department's Graduate Admissions Coordinator (Michelle Spornhauer) or a GSM. We all want to do a good job, but if the demands are unreasonable, speak up.

6. Students at the end of the term! (25 minutes)
  - a. As the term ends, students are thinking more about their grades, exams, papers, etc. Some of them will be concerned and may try to meet with you.
  - b. Be prepared: Are you going to give extra credit assignments? If so, it must be available to all students. How much more work will that add for you?
  - c. Can students easily calculate their own grades? If not, have you kept them updated on participation progress etc?
  - d. Be sure to set boundaries:
    - i. Let students know you won't be on email 24 hours a day
    - ii. It's ok to add some extra office hours, but you need to decide early on what your plan is, otherwise expect requests for 50 extra appointments
7. Questions? (15 minutes) GSMs are available if you have questions or concerns!
8. Evaluations (10 minutes)

### Cases to discuss

#### Case Study 1:

During the weekly meeting for PS 123, the Professor outlines the material she wants covered this week. The AA gives some handouts that might be useful. You work on your lesson plans, following the Professor's guidelines. As you arrive at your classroom, you notice that one of your fellow GSI's lesson plan is still up on the board and the material is completely different from the material the Professor asked you all to cover.

#### Case Study 2:

The final exam is approaching for your class. Your professor has a firm "NO Study Guide" policy. Your students keep asking you to create one, but you remind them that there is a course-wide policy against such study aids. One of your students tells you that her friend with another GSI has received a study guide. She wants to know why you are not willing to help out your students.

#### Case Study 3:

This is the fourth time this semester that the weekly meeting is starting late because Andrea is not here on time. You arrived on time to the meeting and you had other things to do as well. When she finally does arrive, she does not have her sections exams, which the group was going to discuss before handing them back. Now no one can return exams. You know your students are going to be disappointed.

#### **Discussion questions for each case:**

1. What are the core issues raised by this case?
2. What else would you want to know?
3. What are some of the ways this situation could be addressed?

[Handout] Time Management Tips:

1. "To Do" list
  - a. Write down things you have to do, then decide what to do at the moment, what to schedule for later, what to get someone else to do, and what to put off for a later time period
2. Daily/weekly planner
  - a. Write down appointments, classes, and meetings on a chronological logbook or chart.
  - b. If you are more visual, sketch out your schedule
  - c. First thing in the morning, check what's ahead for the day
  - d. Always go to sleep knowing you're prepared for tomorrow
3. Long term planner
  - a. Use a monthly chart so that you can plan ahead.
  - b. Long term planners will also serve as a reminder to constructively plan time for yourself
4. Find out Where you "waste time"
  - a. Do you need a better place to get work done?
  - b. Is it better to set substantive goals instead of time goals?
5. Schedule time to Relax! You will much more productive if you take care of yourself.
6. Know your Priorities!
7. Plan Ahead!
  - a. Pre-make some favorite meals then freeze them so you can simply heat up your meals.
  - b. Schedule time to keep up your work out/fitness routines
8. Getting Things Done by David Allen

### ***Strategies for Teaching Critical Thinking***

Many instructors list “teaching critical thinking” as one of their top instructional goals, yet they struggle to actualize this objective in the classroom. Since the meaning of “critical thinking” can vary by discipline, it often can be helpful to start off a workshop with an activity that elicits a definition. For example, workshop facilitators may wish to provide a key text from the discipline (e.g., a primary source in history or a lab manual in chemistry) and ask participants to read this text “critically.” The discussion that follows should get participants to reflect on the processes used to read the text critically, as well as how the instructors might teach these skills to students. Figure 3.8 lists a sample workshop from the Department of Geological Sciences, which focuses on teaching critical thinking through questioning. Additional resources that may be useful include:

Bean, J.C. (2001). *Engaging ideas: The professor’s guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

*University of Michigan GSI Guidebook*, Part 4 (“Getting Students Involved in Learning”), available at: [http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi\\_guide.html](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi_guide.html)

King, A. (1995). Inquiring minds really do want to know: using questioning to teach critical thinking. *Teaching of Psychology*, 22(1), 13-17.

King, P.M., & Kitchener, K.S. (1994). *Developing reflective judgment: Understanding and promoting intellectual growth and critical thinking in adolescents and adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Perry, W. G., Jr. (1968). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme*. N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

**Figure 3.8: Frannie Skomurski, GSM, Department of Geological Sciences,  
University of Michigan**

## **Encouraging Critical Thinking through Questioning**

### **An activity for GSI workshops or new graduate student orientation programs**

**Background:** One of the challenges I met while serving as a GSI for an intro-level geology class was developing fresh quiz questions week after week that reflected what the students were learning, but encouraged more than just rote memorization of the material. As GSIs we often wonder, “Am I asking the right questions?” or even, “How do I get my students to speak up in class?” As a GSM, I found some insight into these issues while figuring out how to break down some of these challenges for future GSIs.

**Inspiration:** In this 50-minute activity, I rely on the article entitled “A Typology of Questions” that was written at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, and is found in the CRLT “Guidebook for Graduate Student Instructors” ([http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi\\_guide.html](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/gsi_guide.html)). This article breaks questions down into 6 different categories, stemming from *knowledge*-based questions all the way to *evaluation*-type questions. In hindsight, owning the knowledge of these different types of questions provides instructors with an infinite ‘bag-of-tricks’ to draw upon, because knowing the right *type* of question to ask is half the challenge of eliciting the desired type of response.

**Activity:** This activity (PowerPoint + article) was developed for and used during the fall 2006 graduate student orientation program in the Department of Geological Sciences. Each participant was provided a copy of the article mentioned above, and we started with a discussion of critical thinking, and when question development comes in handy. I went over the basic types of questions with everyone, providing examples for each type, and then had the participants break into smaller groups (3 groups of 6). A topic was assigned to each group, such as “The Rock Cycle”, “Global Warming”, or “The Solar System”, and groups were given approximately 15-20 minutes to generate one type of each question related to their topic. Questions were recorded on overheads and presented to everyone at the end of the session (~15-20 minutes). This allowed people to see more examples of each type of question, and to discuss any challenges associated with generating different types of questions.

**Remarks:** By going through each of the 6 types of questions, one begins to discover which questions are better for encouraging students to form their own ideas and opinions. In a discussion section, for instance, a simple question can be made into an active learning experience if students are asked to discuss their opinion with a neighbor regarding a certain topic, or explain a concept to one another. Furthermore, as instructors, we have more flexibility in probing student comprehension if we have different ways to ask questions of them. Perhaps the critical thinking comes from us in this case, in designing the right types of questions to use in different classroom scenarios.

### ***Other Workshops and Sessions***

Following is a list of other possible sessions that a department might include in a teaching program for new GSIs:

- Creating inclusive classrooms (See Chapter Six)
- Interactive lecturing or strategies for giving effective explanations
- Discussion facilitation
- Developing students' writing skills
- Problems that might arise and how to handle them
- Teaching in the lab, studio or clinic
- Working with student groups or teams
- Getting informal feedback from students (e.g., classroom assessment techniques)

CRLT instructional consultants are available to assist faculty members and GSMs as they develop sessions that will be useful to GSIs within their discipline.

