

CHEM 601, Introduction to Laboratory Instruction Final Course and Instructor Evaluations, Fall 2005

Essay Responses for CHEM-601-010 for 05F

Question: Comment on the course.

Quite honestly I do not think that the course needs to be so long. Toward the end it simply became a group therapy session for TAs to complain about their students in. Perhaps making it half a semester would work better. Also, the 8am time frame is awful, people were constantly late. I think attendance would be greatly improved, as well as participation, if the class were scheduled at a later hour.

I would have liked to have gone over things such as grading and the personality tests earlier in the semester. The personality test would have been helpful because it would have let me see what my students are compared to me. Also, the mentoring sessions would have been essential near the beginning of the semester - perhaps have one class dedicated towards mentoring our students and then later in the semester, have one for undergrad researchers.

This course is good for learning about general concepts in teaching.

It was OK

Course is very good and helps student to understand critical role of TA as instructor and mentor.

This course is helpful. It provides many solutions to the problems that TAs will have in their classes.

Course material would be more helpful before semester of teaching assistantship, rather than concurrently.

The course was interesting and helpful as it answered various questions I had regarding teaching. It was also helpful to be aware of the difficulties and problems of other TA's, which were sometimes similar to the ones I encountered.

1. Try to keep the course later in the day.
2. Many students were a bit sleepy and other students were late for the class.

Very boring class, there were some useless exercises, although talking in groups was ok.

The course overall was not very helpful to me as a lab instructor. It may have been more helpful if the specific examples of problems students brought up in class were the main topics of discussion instead of just an opening to each class.

The intention of the course is noble, but undeveloped. I feel that our preparation as graduate teaching assistants needs to be upheld and useful. All too often, I heard fellow students complaining about the course and not putting time and effort into assignments. I wish the course would have encouraged them or forced them to care about their students' education.

The course was a good introduction to teaching the science laboratory. Perhaps students evaluations of the students would benefit how the TA's are performing.

It is very useful since I am a TA of general chemistry. Beside the TA training for teaching lab, this course also provide training as a instructor in research lab, this is very unique.

Fun course, worth my time.

This course is designed for new TA. It is quite helpful for new TA quickly to know the rules and get familiar with the lab teaching skill and communicate with prof. and the other TA on the lab issues.

The course was organized well and covered material that is important to the development of effective educators.

A useful course for those planning on teaching and interested in the subject matter, however the presence of students just taking the course because they have to decreased the overall quality of the course.

Question: Reread the course syllabus and provide some thoughtful feedback. e.g. Did the syllabus adequately describe the course? Are there aspects of the syllabus that are unclear or misleading that should be revised? What is missing that should be included? Feel free to discuss this question with your classmates.

As far as I can tell there was no confusion regarding the syllabus.

The course pretty much followed the syllabus and schedule so I never felt off-guard when coming to class. I would have liked to sit with students who taught the same or similar labs as I did and discuss about situations that occurred in our labs. Some of the courses have the same experiments, so it would have been helpful to talk to each other even if we are teaching different students.

I feel that the syllabus is too wordy; it could be shortened and made simpler by summarizing parts that don't pertain to requirements for the class (i.e. Pedagogical philosophy)

The objects and topics of the syllabus where covered during the course of the class.

The syllabus was resourceful

In my opinion course syllabus provide adequate information about Teaching skill and how to make teaching effective.

we are just talking with each other in the class. it will be better if we can watch some lab classes of experienced TAs'.

The syllabus seems to be an accurate description of the course content.

The syllabus described the course accurately. I liked how each of the topics are linked at the top of the page for easy access.

No time to reread the syllabus

Everything in the syllabus was fine.

The syllabus accurately describes the class and what will be covered.

The course syllabus was more than adequate.

The syllabus accurately described the course. Some of the syllabus could be revised and shortened to a few notes, since some of it seemed to be repetitious, such as the do not be late. This should be inferred that students should be on time. Most of the expectations of you and the course instructor are given.

No issues with the syllabus

Yes, the syllabus is adequate. It is clear.

Bulleted syllabi are better.

Yes, the syllabus adequately describe the course. No aspects are unclear.

I thought the syllabus was a fine example of a learning based syllabus.

I think the syllabus does describe the course accurately.

Question: Open Mic. Reflect on the course and identify those aspects that you like or think could be improved. Please suggest ways for improvement.

I am an extrovert, so I did enjoy talking in class. However, I felt that there was too much debate at times. People would talk about how their way of doing it was right, or their way of answering the question was better. Sometimes instead of a format for sharing and exchanging ideas it became a format for one person to express their ideas. I think that to this end group discussions should be monitored better. Perhaps say at the beginning of the exercise that everybody is to give a reply so that you know that all parties are participating in the discussion, and are not being deterred by other classmates. Also, I think that people that have previously been a TA, such as third year students, should not be required to take this course. It was intimidating to sit with people who had done TA work before and try to have group discussions. You did not want to disagree with someone who had experience.

I enjoyed the fifteen minutes at the beginning discussing about problems that we came across in our teaching and trying to think of solutions that could resolve the issue. I would have also liked if something would have been done to students who were consistently late because they were a distraction while a discussion was occurring and also was upsetting since many of the students were always on-time or early. Even though the class is pass/fail, something could have been done to prevent these tardy students from ever being late again.

I enjoyed learning about different problems that TA's faced and how they deal with them. While sometimes I had faced these problems myself, other times I had not, so I was even able to prevent some problems before they occurred. I think it might be interesting if there was a box that students could submit problems or questions in, which could then be addressed in the class (this would be useful if a TA was dealing with a problem that they didn't want to be recognized for)

Open Discussions were helpful, but should be more guided.

it was early in the morning... -

I think the class was therapeutic at first to be able to vent about problems that had occurred in the lab during the previous week. The personality test was probably my favorite activity. The lab enhancement should be redesigned to become a more effective assignment. I think the suggestion made in class to make it a two part assignment would help improve the outcome.

I feel like the class was helpful in the beginning as it was a good icebreaker for teaching a laboratory. It helped settle nerves for the first few weeks of lab. Towards the end, I feel as though it got repetitive.

1. As said before try to put in group discussions where while one group is discussing issues others who are not discussing is observing it. May be 1-2 classes can be kept for discussing how to grade More Biological examples which will be helpful to Biology TAs. A faculty from Biology can conduct 1-2 sessions

Discussion was good, but I thought there was too much of it. A little more lecture on the various topics in the course might help.

Many aspects of the class were too long and drawn out for the point that was being conveyed. For instance, the personality type assignment was overkill to display that different people learn, think, and act in different ways.

Honestly, I don't feel that the university has enough concern for the undergraduates' education in the laboratory. I felt that there was an excessive amount of attention on safety in the laboratory, which is warranted. However, I had the feeling that Dr. White was a lone martyr trying to help us in our strides to help our students. Being concerned for my students, I would have greatly appreciated feedback on my teaching in lab either by Dr. White, my instructor or fellow teaching assistants. There were too many graduate students that were indifferent to their students. This carefree attitude was not isolated in the chemistry/biochemistry department.

Some ways for improvement are that the students should observe experienced TA's teaching as well as inexperienced to evaluate the pros and cons of teaching labs. Also teaching tips in the class should apply to recitations as well as labs. It seemed the class was more focused on lab sections than recitations sections.

Class was not suited for an 8am time slot.

The time schedule for this class is really a challenge to me,;), If it is on afternoon, it would be better.

Great course. I like the idea of watching a fellow TA instead of going to this class once a week as an improvement.

I thought at times the class turned into a time to vent our frustrations more than a way to fix the problems and become better teachers. I am not sure if this is a result of the course or the fact that many of the people in the class did not want to be there and do not like to teach.

I enjoyed the opportunity to hear about the issues other people were facing in their teaching. However, I felt like I was hearing from the same small group of students week after week. I also feel it would have been more useful if the discussions had focused on general teaching issues rather than specific laboratory issues.

Question: In a sentence or two, describe or characterize CHEM-601, Introduction to Laboratory Instruction, to someone who has not taken the course.

A forum for complaining about what your students do. You mostly let the talkers do the talking and just sit there and catch up on your sleep you missed that morning. Every once in a while you hand in an assignment, and every once in a while you come across a situation where you really want to get some advice and so you ask during class.

A good course for those who have never taught or assisted in lab prior to coming here. It's a relief to know that problems and questions that arise in lab or recitation situations can be solved in this course.

CHEM-601 is a course that introduces ideas that my help TA's such as learning and personality styles, misconceptions in science, and problems that TA's may face.

An open discussion of teaching techniques and theories, some of which is helpful in being a TA.

You meet other TAs and discuss ways to improve.

This course is exceptionally good for those who are teaching for first time in the laboratory. I would strongly recommend this course to all TA's of different departments.

it will help you to become an experienced TA and make it a easy job to work as a TA

A course, offered at an inconvenient time, offering information that comes too late in the semester to be of any practical use in your lab.

CHEM 601 is an introduction course that assists first year TAs by discussing problems that may occur in the lab as well as introduce teaching techniques that may be useful.

To learn effective teaching techniques and ideas to use in an undergraduate laboratory setting.

1,Discuss concern you have as a TA 2,Helpful tips to conduct a successful lab 3,Discuss your concern with other peer TAs 4,Getting help when you are stuck in a TA situation.

Discussion of problems that TA's had in their labs along with some assignments to help us learn ways to be more effective at teaching.

This course is marginally useful for new TA's. The amount taken out it is not proportional to the amount of time spent in the class, however.

If you are extremely anxious about teaching and want advice on education, take the course.

This course is a good introduction to teaching if you have never taught before. I gives you a good idea of what to do, what not to do. However, keep in mind that not all teaching skills are learned by sitting in a classroom.

Basic overview of teaching theories and issues that arise for TAs

This course covered a lot information for a TA in science lab. Especially grading, lab controlling, or some other ethic issues.

If you have not taken a course like this it is helpful. Be prepared for people walking in late and disrupting the discussions. If you get a good group the time will pass quickly.

Chem-601 is a course designed for new TA, which tell you how to be a good TA, discuss the lab teaching skill, the problem you may meet during the class, and write a story about the TA experience. it is really helpful for your role as a TA. I really recommend you to take it.

A course that will provide an overview of what it takes to be an effective educator.

This is a course required of first year chemistry TAs, which introduces them to the difficulties and issues that arise while TAing, through both discussion with other TAs and presentations of topics of interest in education.

Instructor Evaluation Responses

Question: Comment on the instructor. Responses

Dr. White is very friendly and approachable.

Dr. White was very approachable outside of class. He presented the information to the class in a very unique way, which goes along smoothly with the nature of the course.

Dr. White shows a lot of enthusiasm in the course material and he finds interesting ways for us to learn how we can improve as TA's

He was Ok

Course was structured very well. Prof. White demonstrated his teaching skill by sharing his experiences and views about 'How to make teaching effective'

a very kind instructor helpful

He tried to encourage active participation in the class. The class had a good environment which allowed active participation. Enjoyed being in the class. But can put in more matter relating to Biology as the examples taken were mostly from chemistry.

Personally, I didn't find Dr. White very helpful. I mean, the students did most of the talking about their problems in lab but as far as learning concepts to use in teaching, I didn't find it to be a worthwhile course.

Dr. White is quite enthusiastic about this class, which is refreshing.

I thought this class was a good introduction to if we had never taught before. It seemed to make the transition smoother. However, some of the things we discussed in class are only learned by application and not discussion.

Dr. White is a very organized professor, all the material was carefully prepared and organized. It is easy to follow the information covered in the class.

Dr. White truly cares about teaching and you can see that in his lectures.

Dr. White is passionate about the subject matter he teaches, but he has a lot of difficulty engaging the students, perhaps in part due to the early hour of the class.

Question Identify or describe some thing(s) that Professor White does particularly well.

Dr. White is able to put you in your students shoes, which I think is essential to being a good TA.

I think he is very resourceful and provides us with many resources to use in conjunction of the course and the courses we teach. I think the material which is covered in class fits well with what we want to achieve.

Dr White gives out assignments that help students discover practical resources for being TA's, and he leads class discussions that address actual and potential problems that may be faced in the laboratory/classroom.

mind engaging problems - large knowledge database - class participation - very punctual

Prof. White encourages class participation. Most importantly he would discuss TA's teaching experience in class, suggesting some important tips about those particular situations.

use examples, videos in the class.

He made you consider things in a different way than you're used to, which was interesting and helpful.

To involve the class well. To give everybody a chance to participate.

He listens to students.

Involves the class in the discussion

He is very adept at creating debates in the classroom. I found that I do not have the same opinions as my fellow students, and I was challenged to stand up for my beliefs.

He definitely goes into thorough detail about the subject at hand. He also does well in initiating discussion in the classroom.

- Ignited class discussion as to start a free flowing and nested chain of comments.

At the beginning of the class, he let TA discuss the problem from the lab. this is very helpful.

He is particularly good at encouraging class debate and participation

Enthusiastic and attempts to engage students in discussion.

Question: Identify or describe some way(s) that Professor White could improve his teaching (and your learning).

Sometimes group discussions got out of hand, they would last all most the whole period. While this is fine for people who are extroverted, introverted members of the class do not often get to express their opinions. I would suggest more exercises that could be handed in, or done individually, for those who do not like to speak in front of the class.

Dr White could improve the class by focusing more on teaching techniques, since many students who take the class may be totally new to the experience.

Group/class discussions forced each person to contribute to the learning experience.

more activities

Prof. White could ask TA's to attend and evaluate other TA's one lab. This would give him an idea about TA's performance in the lab.

The time for the class is too early in the morning. it will be better if they change the time schedule

Sometimes when students were answering questions it seemed as though the professor was formulating his response to the comment instead of actually listening to what the student was saying. As a student that can be frustrating because it makes you feel like you are not being "heard".

1. Put more biology examples.
2. Try to put in some group discussion among students which others students who are not participating, can observe.

Not being so picky about students being 10 seconds late. Doing more actual teaching and less discussion.

I found that some of the topics covered were redundant and/or topics that were simplistic and not insightful.

Perhaps a break in the middle of the semester is necessary since some of the teaching skills are learned in application/experiment.

After seeing him interact with students, It is obvious when a student is saying something he doesn't agree with because he tends to dismiss their comments.

Have more activities to get a variety of participation rather than just a few students. Have more assignments so that students take class more seriously.