

Graduate Teaching Certificate Program

Workshop/Seminar Review Form

Date: 12 January 2021

Workshop/Seminar Title: A Dynamic first day of class

Presenter/Facilitator: Deborah Garrity

1. Explain the central topic and purpose of the workshop/seminar. What are the presenter/facilitator's goals for this workshop?

This workshop was focused on some strategies to make the first day of class engaging and dynamic. Students on the first day of class are wondering basically three things: Is the class interesting? Can I succeed in this class? Is the professor good? The goal of the workshop was to give instructors ideas on how to have a first day of class that answers these questions for the students and creates the learning community and classroom atmosphere that you want for the rest of the semester. Things are easy to change at the beginning of the semester, but get entrenched later on, so having a dynamic and engaging first day can create more positive learning outcomes.

2. What information in the workshop/seminar was most valuable to you?

Since students are asking the three basic questions above on the first day, it's important that they get answers that will make them want to stay and engage in the material and feel like they are part of a supportive learning community. If you only go over the syllabus on the first day of class, this can leave the students with an overly harsh or just wrong impression of the class. Instead, it can be useful to share interesting anecdotes from the course material. This can show the students the class is going to be interesting and show them a bit of your teaching style. It's also important to have the students start to develop relationships with the other students, which can be done through introductions to the whole class or in small groups, depending on class size. Students also want to know early on whether they can succeed in the class. No one wants to start an endeavor that will just end poorly for them. To address this, the first day can include a discussion of how to learn and study and what will be important for this class. Creating a community that will support each other in their learning will also be a good way to for students to feel like they have the resources to succeed. Getting to know the students can take a while, so introduction prompts are good to continue for a couple weeks. Finally, students want to know if the professor will be interesting and available. Students often get the impression that professors are busy, smart, and intimidating, so on the first day you should allow the student to get to know you more so they also get the impression that you are flexible, inclusive, approachable, and available, or whatever else is important to you and your teaching

persona.

3. How will you connect that information to your own pedagogical endeavors?

From this workshop, I will definitely connect a lot of this information to my planning for first days of class. It was valuable to see how different ways to conduct a first day of class can either enhance or detract from your values and goals as a teacher. Being deliberate with how the first day goes can set up the rest of the semester to be more successful. I've learned a lot about making classrooms inclusive and diverse, and establishing all those values early is important. I will especially incorporate information on belonging on the first day in the classroom, since that is something important for me in my teaching.

4. After attending this workshop/seminar, what additional information would you like to seek about this subject?

This seminar was very focused on not going over the syllabus on the first day of class, but as a student I appreciate knowing the structure of the class and how the class is set up and explained in the syllabus usually tells me a lot about my ability to succeed, the professor, and also allows me to plan how much time the class will likely take me over the semester. I think that information is really helpful to have explained in class, and early on. So, I would like to learn a little more about how to mesh all these important priorities on the first day. I could also get more information on get-to-know-you questions that foster inclusion and belonging that would be useful on the first day of class.