

Collaborative Pedagogy Training for Graduate Student Instructors or Early Career Librarians

Margaret McLaughlin and Madeline Keyser

Indiana University Bloomington

INTRODUCTION

The labor of graduate student workers and academic librarians often centers around teaching. However, many graduate student workers and early career librarians have little-to-no formal pedagogy training and must often learn from experience or from advice from veteran instructors. Creating accessible and sustainable pedagogy training can help alleviate these barriers to teaching. In the fall semester of 2021, the graduate student instructors in Indiana University's Department of Comparative Literature (CMLT) paired with the IU Libraries' Department of Teaching & Learning and Center for Innovative Teaching & Learning (CITL) to create universal, formalized pedagogy training for new instructors. The presenters, both recent graduates of IU's MLS program and current PhD students and Associate Instructors in IU's Department of Comparative Literature, are co-chairs of the Student Advisory Board for IU's Department of Comparative Literature, and they initiated and spearheaded this collaboration.

OBJECTIVES

Through our collaboration, we hoped to create sustainable, universal, and formalized pedagogy training for new instructors. In order to do so, we established the following objectives:

- Create a digital repository of teaching materials (hosted on Canvas, our institutional learning management system) including past syllabi, assignments, and example lesson plans for commonly taught courses in the Department of Comparative Literature.
- Pair with the IU Libraries' Department of Teaching & Learning and Center for Innovative Teaching & Learning to compile best tips for pedagogy and creating accessible learning spaces.
- Create a collaboratively run instructor orientation program for the fall 2022 semester
- Develop a series of pedagogy workshops to be held throughout the 2022-2023 academic year

APPROACH

Identify Instructor Needs

Our first step was to identify instructor needs. We held a town hall for all CMLT graduate students to identify gaps in current pedagogy support and create a list requested needs. We shared this list with the department and began planning improvements to pedagogy support.

Pair with Campus Partners

After initial discussions, we realized that many of our goals could be met by pairing with campus partners. The majority of CMLT instructors teach a course called C110: Writing the World, which serves as a writing intensive course that satisfies university requirements for a composition class. Because of this scope, we chose to partner with CITL, Writing Tutorial Services (a subdivision of CITL), and the Libraries' Department of Teaching & Learning.

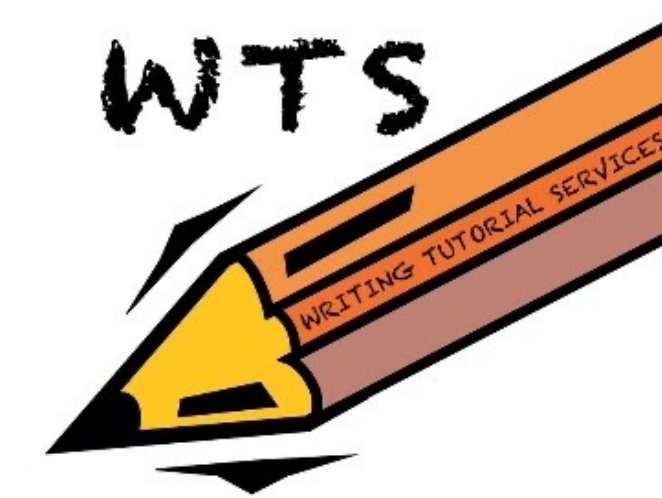
Develop a Plan for Improving Pedagogy

Once we partnered with other campus departments and services, we developed a plan for improving CMLT graduate student pedagogy training. We decided to create a repository of teaching materials so new instructors have examples on which to model their own pedagogy and classroom creation. We also decided to create two types of training sessions: a one-shot, universal orientation session held right before the fall semester, and a series of CMLT specific workshops held throughout the academic year.

RESULTS

Unity and Community

The town hall meeting and subsequent discussions with the CMLT department faculty and graduate students helped create a stronger sense of community in the department. It also ensured that the list of suggested improvements represented the entire community of graduate student workers. The partnership with other campus departments and services created a collaborative team dedicated to improving training for graduate student instructors, in turn creating an interdepartmental community of support and aid. This partnership normalizes the collaboration and mentorship necessary in effective teaching and actively provides support to marginalizes voices in the academy. With systematic, institutional support, graduate student instructors do not need to rely on the invisible labor or learn on the job. They are provided with a community that openly provides them with the guidance they need to become effective instructors.



Sustainable and Universal Pedagogy Support

The teaching repository was launched in late October of 2021 and was met with immediate acclaim and gratitude. Several instructors have already used it to improve the courses they are currently teaching, and it has been shared with next years Associate Instructors, especially those teaching for the first time. We have a full-time staff member dedicated to maintaining the repository with all updated syllabi, assignments, and tips for teaching in CMLT. Planning for both the orientation and workshop series is still in progress. We have worked closely with CITL to develop universal pedagogy training to provide CMLT instructors with tools that can be applied to any teaching scenario, regardless of discipline. The workshop series aims to provide more subject-specific training and respond to the ongoing and developing needs of the graduate student instructors. We have identified workshop topics and presenters for the fall semester. As an unexpected outcome of the collaboration, the Department of Comparative Literature has begun their own teaching library following discussions with campus partners. The library ranges from general pedagogy to specific and literary analysis specific pedagogy, including titles such as bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress*, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say, I Say*, and John Bean and Dan Melzer's *Engaging Ideas*. This collaboration was and will continue to be time intensive and requires a lot of labor. Several of the changes implemented by this partnership will also take a long time to implement. It also involves a lot of organization and patience, as several voices from many different disciplines are involved. Despite these challenges, this collaboration helped create sustainable, accessible, and professional pedagogy training that brought in diverse perspectives and established a community centered around open and equal teaching support.

APPLICATION

Through this poster, we hope to provide a framework for providing accessible and universal pedagogy training for graduate students and early career librarians. We also hope to encourage collaboration between departments and give a space for those whose voices are often not prioritized in higher education institutions. The following steps provide tips for how to apply this type of collaboration between any subject-specific department and library department.



Step 1: Identify Needs and Gaps in Current Resources

The first step starts as almost all problem solving does: with a research question. What are you trying to improve? Who needs help? What do they need help with? Once you have answered these questions, identify gaps in current resources. What resources are needed to best accomplish the task or solve the problem? What resources do you currently have? What are missing? The most important part of this step is to include the people you are trying to help and not to assume the needs of others. Collaboration and communication are key!

Step 2: Identify Partners

Once you've identified gaps in your resources, look at other departments and services on your campus. Which of those specialize in the gaps you identified? What other resources on campus can enrich your program and help solve your problem? Once you've identified possible partners, reach out to them and see if they have the interest and capacity in partnering.

Step 3: Collaborate and Implement

Once you have your partners, begin your collaboration! Implement any necessary changes brought on by this collaboration. Be sure to regularly reflect and assess any changes or updates. And remember! Like most processes, this one is nonlinear and often iterative. Be prepared to move between steps in any order and to return to steps as needed. Happy collaborating!

Contact

Margaret McLaughlin (marmclau@iu.edu)
PhD Student, Department of Comparative Literature
MLS 2022

Madeline Keyser (mjkeyser@iu.edu)
PhD Student, Department of Comparative Literature
MLS 2020

LABOR RIGHTS

Over 1,700 graduate student workers at Indiana University are currently participating in a labor strike following the administration's failure to recognize their legal right to unionize. Until this year, most graduate workers were paid under \$18,000. Graduate student instructors in the Department of Comparative Literature, for example, are paid just over \$15,000. While the administration has recently announced that all workers will be paid at least \$18,000 starting in the fall semester of 2022, this is still several thousand dollars under the cost of living in Bloomington, IN (estimated at \$21,000). Not being paid a livable wage, combined with thousands of dollars in mandatory student fees and poor health insurance, leaves many graduate students (both presenters included) needing to take on second or even third jobs to make ends meet. Administration has responded to the labor strike with retaliation threats, including job termination. Despite this, hundreds of faculty members and thousands of undergraduates and alumni have issued statements of support. As spaces, libraries are centered around equality, inclusion, and support. As people, librarians have consistently proved to us their compassion, commitment to their ideals, and love for their community. The presenters strongly believe that the labor rights of graduate student workers are key to maintaining information literate classrooms and that the core of the ongoing labor strike is particularly apt for a conference about information literacy and instruction. If you would like to learn more about our unionization efforts, the labor strike, or how you can show support, please visit the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition website (QR code below).



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