

# Departmental Teaching Fellow: Linguistics

## Background: Teaching in Linguistics

Linguistics is EXPLODING!

**Concentrators:**

4 per year → 14 per year

**Students in our Intro course:**

30 per semester → 130 per semester

- Grad students are expected to teach in G3 and G4 year.
- Most TFS propose, design, and teach 6-week sophomore/junior **tutorials**.
- TFs also teach **sections**, with far more **team teaching** now than even two years ago.

## The Linguistics Teaching Award

**Background:** Many TFs **design and teach** tutorials, with 2-4 students. This is too few students to qualify for a Bok Teaching Award, and yet there should be some equivalent recognition of excellence in teaching these.

**The Distinguished Teaching Award in Linguistics** was created a few years ago, but very few grad students have applied. **How might we change it to make it worth the effort?**

Old teaching award	New teaching award
Syllabus	Syllabus
Slides from one lecture	-
Sample assignment (optional)	-
Student evaluations	Student evaluations
60-minute video tape	-
Teaching statement	Teaching statement
	Letter of recommendation from a student (optional)

**Goal:** Putting together this application should be a **good investment of time** as it should entail compiling materials useful for future academic job applications.

## Also ask me about....

- TF Time management checklist
- Integrating tutorial evaluations into the Q
- Q evaluation consultations in January

Acknowledgments: Many thanks to Pamela Pollock, my mentor at the Bok Center, for her advice and suggestions this year. Thanks also to Cheryl Murphy and Kevin Ryan in helping plan the new Practicum, and to Gasper Bagus (DTF 2017-2018) for getting it started!

## THE PRACTICUM PROBLEM

**What is Practicum?** Professional development course that provides graduate students with training in teaching and in various tasks common to academic life.

**Why is it a problem?** Both students and faculty acknowledge that the existing format doesn't work.

- Taken by G2s and G3s simultaneously
- Slightly different syllabus every year...
- ...that has to balance between not repeating too much information for the G3s...
- ...and yet providing enough information for G2s before they teach.
- End result:** grad students often went through teaching training too late (midway through G3 year) and learned about professional aspects such as research statements and teaching statements too late

**New format:** Taken by G2s and G4s, meeting separately on alternating weeks.

- G2s focus on pedagogy to prepare for teaching
- G4s focus on job-market and dissertation topics

## WORKSHOP: SYLLABUS & COURSE DESIGN

**Problem:** Rising G3s are expected to propose and write a syllabus for their tutorials by mid-August. To date, the format of Practicum meant that some years, **G2s had no syllabus/course-design training until after they started teaching their tutorial**.

**Solution:** This summer I put together a **workshop on syllabus & course design**. I compiled materials the Bok Center website and from the MIT Teaching & Learning Laboratory, and asked the Assistant Head Tutor in Linguistics for help in making the workshop **specific to the tutorial system in linguistics**, including:

- Our concentrators' typical **linguistics backgrounds**
- Expectations** for tutorial topic, structure, workload, and types of assessment

**Outcome:** Workshop allowed TFs to think critically about goals and methods for their tutorials and to put together excellent syllabuses.

**Going forward:** The workshop will be a **regular part of the G2 practicum**, such that every year rising G3s will be ready to prepare tutorial proposals and syllabuses with sufficient preparation, including **better understanding of the tutorial system and who our students are**.

## Practicum in Linguistics Spring 2019

### Syllabus: G2s

#### Week 1: Conference overview & abstracts

In class: discussion of various conferences, overview of abstract goals and structure, looking at good and bad examples.  
Due next time:

- Write an abstract for one of your squibs/projects.
- Bring in one of your squibs from last year.

#### Week 2: Writing tips & workshopping squibs

In class: writing workshop

Due next time:

- Be a reviewer for one of your squibs from last semester. Discuss how your squib achieves some of the goals for structure and argumentation presented in class and consider where your squib does not meet some of these goals.

#### Week 3: Teaching section at Harvard

In class: [Led by Bok Pedagogy Fellow in Linguistics] What is "section"? What are the goals when teaching section? Overview of successful active learning techniques in linguistics.

Due next time:

- Shadowing: attend 1 hour of one section for a course taught in the linguistics department; attend 1 hour of one tutorial taught in the linguistics department
- Choose a topic for a tutorial you might want to teach one day

#### Week 4: Syllabus & course design

In class: [Led by Bok Pedagogy Fellow in Linguistics] debrief and reflection from shadowing; workshop on syllabus & course design

Due next time:

- Prepare microteaching
- Peruse the internet, check out the academic websites of at least one grad student and one junior faculty member; bring in notes on what seems memorable/important about these websites.

#### Week 5: Microteaching, round 1 / Building a CV and a web presence

In class:

- [Led by Bok Pedagogy Fellow in Linguistics] microteaching (taped) and reflection
- discussion of CV components and website priorities

Due next time:

- meet with BPF to look over tape
- prepare second round of microteaching based on in-class and in-meeting feedback
- create a website (settings can be private such that they are only accessible if you have a direct link)

#### Week 6: Microteaching, round 2 / Looking ahead: generals paper advice

In class:

- [Led by Bok Pedagogy Fellow in Linguistics] microteaching (not taped) and reflection
- Discussing timeline for G2 and G3 year, advice on generals papers & committees

## Practicum in Linguistics Spring 2019

### Topics: G4s

- Writing a research statement
- Writing a statement of teaching philosophy (led by Bok Center speaker)
- Job applications
- Ins-and-outs of publishing
- The art of interviewing
- Mock interviews
- Dissertation advice

With about 50% of our grad students being **international** and many domestic students coming from universities **without a section culture**, it is worth spending time on this, and then reiterating in the Bok Fall Teaching Week.

## TF SHADOWING

**The problem:** Very often, the **first Harvard section our grad students attend is also the first one they teach**. This leads to a lot of **unclear expectations and a lack of confidence**.

**Solution:** This spring I piloted "G2 shadowing" in our department. It's very **little time commitment (2hrs) but with a lot of impact!** G2s experience first hand what the Harvard classroom is like, and how teaching environments differ between sections and tutorials.

**Outcome:** Very positive. In their own words:

"It was helpful to see experienced graduate students organizing material and presenting it to undergraduates in an engaging way. It will be easier for me to prepare for my responsibilities next year with a concrete notion of what is expected and what is possible."

"I feel like I know more about what a tutorial/section should look like or could be, which makes it easier to teach one by myself. Besides I feel **mentally relieved** after seeing how good our senior graduate students have done."

**Going forward:** Shadowing will be a part of Practicum, with an in-class reflection/debrief led by the PF.

**If it ain't broke, don't fix it!**

Microteaching has been a long-standing successful part of the Linguistics Practicum.