

From the Classroom to the Group Chat: Developing an Undergraduate Teaching Assistantship for Library One-Shots

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THE CONTEXT

First-Year Seminars

- Interdisciplinary seminars taught on a variety of topics that serve as a common experience for all first-year students
- 2 SLOS: information literacy and college readiness
- FYS 335: an existing 2-credit course for undergraduate teaching assistantships

FYS One-Shots (2021)

- 44 total FYS one-shots
- 22 sections, 1-3 sessions each led by 2 librarians & TA
- Significant number of follow-up research appointments

THE FRAMEWORKS

Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) in Libraries

Peer-Assisted Learning: "the active and interactive mediation of learning through other learners who are not professional teachers" (Topping & Ely, 2001)

Many libraries offer models of PAL:

- peer-led reference services (Faix, et. al, 2010; Fargo, 2018)
- librarians teach research skills to TAs, who bring those skills to the classroom (Donahue, et. al, 2017; Tucker, 1977)
- collaborations with faculty and writing centers to embed peer mentorship & information literacy in the curriculum (Bolton et. al, 2009)
- library internships with credit in academic departments, such as English or History (Dahl, 2011)

Yet few examples of scaffolded programs for undergraduates teaching one-shot information literacy instruction sessions exist (Bodemer, 2011; Ronan & Pappas, 2001).

Relational Care in the Library One-Shot

- Rooted in feminist pedagogy & an ethics of care; the one-shot is the beginning of a relationship, not a closed circle (Morin, 2021).
- Students as co-teachers help us break down the top-down authority of the classroom and offer valuable insight on first-year students' experience.
- The one-shot provides an opportunity for freedom, experimentation, and structured feedback for the TA.
- The relationship between the TA and teaching librarians allows librarians to reflect and get feedback on their own teaching.

THE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP

Learning Outcomes

- Identify and communicate research tools and strategies meant to support first-year students
- Develop leadership, teaching, research, and communication skills
- Critically self-reflect in order to improve your teaching
- Create accessible and inclusive lesson plans for diverse student learners

Deliverables

- Weekly written reflections, weekly in-person check-ins, informal debriefings after class sessions, mid-point and end-of-term reflections
- 4 reference hours per week
- Participation in one-shots, through observation, co-teaching, and solo teaching
- Job preparation: final portfolio with resume bullet points

Who we recruited: library work-study students, juniors/seniors, students with demonstrated writing and research skills, students involved in peer mentorship

Scaffolding: Prepare, Experience, Reflect

WEEKS 1-2

Prepare: TA reviews instruction materials, research training
Reflect: TA reflects on their first-year experience

WEEKS 3-4

Prepare: TA reviews instruction materials, research training
Experience: TA observes both library instructors
Reflect: TA reflects on classroom observation, different teaching styles, the differences in FYS sections

WEEKS 5-8

Prepare: TA works with librarians to co-create instruction materials
Experience: TA leads an activity; begins meeting with students
Reflect: TA reflects on developing, executing, and assessing the activities

WEEKS 9-15

Prepare: TA develops an entire one-shot lesson plan
Experience: TA leads one-shot sessions on their own, both with and without librarians observing
Reflect: TA reflects on developing, executing, and assessing the sessions, as well as ongoing student meetings

CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

Our TA said:

- "I feel like they appreciate me telling them about my experiences with research, writing, and what methods worked for me."
- "The most important thing that I learned was that I really love teaching, and I think that I am good at it."

TAKEAWAYS

The Expected

- Learners responded to TA relating her personal experience in research and coursework & became more actively engaged in the classroom conversation.
- Many students prefer to access reference services through a peer, rather than a librarian.
- It was beneficial to work with a student who worked in the library, had excelled at research and writing, and who was already involved in peer mentoring programs.
- Our TA reported gaining confidence in teaching and research.
- Because of its uniform learning outcomes and population, the first-year one-shot can be an effective place for teacher training and peer-led learning.

The Surprising

- No increase in student use of the reference office; instead, students got in touch with the TA through text during off-hours and in person in the library and around campus.
- Our TA helped us gain insight into both undergraduate student needs and ways we might improve our own teaching.
- Our TA was able to adapt lesson plans to her own interests and academic major, showing us the adaptability of the one-shot as a ground for teacher training.

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