



**SYLLABUS: Teaching at the College Level in Sociology**  
**SYA6660-01**  
**Summer "B" Session, 2008**  
**MW 1:30-5:00**  
**BEL 006**

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**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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Course website: <http://campus.fsu.edu>

**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:**

Wilbert J. McKeachie (2006) *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers. 12th edition.* Houghton Mifflin. ISBN:0-618-51556-9. (Purchase)

Linda B. Nilson (2003) *Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.* Anker Press. ISBN: 1-882982-64-9. (Purchase)

Other readings will be available online or in the FSU Library.

**GENERAL RESOURCES:**

FSU Center for Teaching and Learning (2008) *Academic & Professional Program Services* < <http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/>> -- This is the home page for CTL. You should bookmark this very important link and check it first.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This graduate seminar deals with pedagogical issues and practical problems in teaching sociology at the college level. It is intended for graduate students who may already be teaching or who anticipate teaching in the future. Others are welcome to attend and participate at any time (faculty, adjuncts). The course will be run as a workshop in which we will collectively examine a variety of teaching-related challenges and practice various methods and techniques for handling them. The course will deal with many questions you may have about teaching, and it will allow you to address topics and issues that may be of concern to you as a new teacher. Finally, it will give you an opportunity to get positive and constructive feedback from student colleagues on your teaching practices and to gain expertise, confidence, and pleasure in your own teaching.

Some of the pedagogical or craftsmanship issues we will consider include methods of leading discussions, effective lecturing techniques, making classes more interactive, service and other experientially-based learning, constructing/ grading exams and other

methods of assessment, instructional technology including PRS (“clickers”), podcasts, blogs & wikis, web-supported courses (100% online and hybrid), strategies for motivating students, getting feedback on your teaching, and so forth. Some of the practical problems will include developing a syllabus with course objectives and requirements, dealing with disruptive students, plagiarism, sensitivities to student diversity, absenteeism, ethical challenges, and department/ university procedures and regulations. As a by-product, we will also deal with some discipline-specific issues pertaining to sociology, such as how to organize an introductory course and how to teach students to think sociologically and to evaluate social theories and research.

It is VERY important to me that this course speaks to YOUR concerns and issues as new teachers. I think the topics on the syllabus are important, but there are probably other points that concern you that are not included. It is typically the case that if one student has a question or interest, it is shared. Therefore, PLEASE let me know if there are things you would like to have covered in the seminar, and I will do my absolute best to rearrange things so we can get them on our agenda.

I offer this course with a great deal of humility. I have taught at the university level for thirty years (!), but I have always approached teaching more as a vocation than a subject of scholarly study. I did have a course like this when I was in graduate school (and, indeed, I used a *much* earlier edition of the McKeachie book), but my approach to this subject matter has mainly been that of a practitioner. Along with my collegial and administrative experience, my years in the classroom have reinforced an earlier conviction that good teachers are made, not born. I believe that almost anyone who has the positive qualities it takes to get an advanced degree in our field can be helped to become a more effective teacher, given sufficient motivation, time, and effort. Perhaps the scholarly literature on teaching will be helpful in this (after all, we are [*mostly?*] empirically minded social scientists), but I believe primary emphasis should be given to developing personal qualities such as commitment, enthusiasm, empathy, compassion, and fairness, as well as learning specific techniques that can help us, whatever our “classroom” situation (e.g., face-to-face or virtual, one-on-one, small seminars, or mass lectures). Good teaching is not an accident, but neither is “it” something that can be produced by simply following a recipe. Substantial and continuing effort is required to craft a course that meets its objectives – not to ignore that developing course objectives is itself no small matter! I hope that this seminar will provide you the opportunity to explore your personal qualities and learn some techniques that will help you translate these into highly effective teaching. And, quite selfishly, I hope to learn from you, too. I will work hard to model effective teaching, but your most memorable lessons may come from observing my shortcomings.

I want to acknowledge the efforts of my late colleague, Dr. Michael Armer, who originally developed this course and worked to have it added to our graduate program. Because of his generosity and the demonstrated effectiveness of his commitment to teacher training, I have borrowed very liberally from his course outline and materials.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

I have three goals for the class. First, I want you to become aware of the range of issues that must be considered in teaching sociology at the college level. Second, I want you to learn some of the ways effective teachers deal with these concerns, both generally and in the specific context of Sociology courses. Third, I want you to demonstrate your teaching skills based on these lessons and give positive and constructive feedback to others in the class as they do the same.

**GRADING/EVALUATION:**

The course is organized as a workshop rather than a typical academic seminar and will emphasize a mastery orientation to the material. There will be graded assignments of various kinds, including in-class daily quizzes on assigned readings (sorry!), and other written statements and verbal presentations, but no final term paper or examinations. Grades will reflect my best professional judgment about the quality of your participation and contributions, conceptualized as satisfactory (check or “A”) or unsatisfactory/inadequate (check minus or “B” [assuming more than minimal responsiveness to the assignment – which will get a zero]), with the possibility of outstanding if you truly go beyond conventional standards (check plus or “A+”). I may require unsatisfactory work to be redone. Your final grade will consist of my evaluation of your daily quizzes, written assignments, and contributions to discussion based on assigned readings (40%), your preparation and effectiveness in carrying out class exercises and teaching demonstrations (40%), and the effort and contribution you make to developing your own and others’ teaching skills (20%). Grading will be according to a standard scale: A (90-100%), B (80-89%), and so on. Plus/minus grading may be used for final semester grades. FSU does not allow a final grade of “A+.”

**COURSE POLICIES:**

Class attendance and participation are required. Although standard FSU rules on excused absences certainly apply, it is nonetheless the case that in-class quizzes, exercises, or discussions missed due to absence cannot be made up. Written assignments will have a late penalty of 10% per week (10% within one week, 20% within two weeks, etc) to encourage punctuality but not be a death penalty. If there are extenuating circumstances that affect you, *please* see me.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

There will be numerous assignments and in-class exercises. Among these are: (1) developing a complete syllabus for an introductory level course (including goals and objectives, requirements, grading, and course policies) and giving feedback to 1-2 classmates on their syllabi; (2) giving a 15-20 minute mini-lecture in the seminar on a teaching-related topic to be selected in consultation with me (video-taped so you and I can jointly review it later) and giving/ receiving feedback from fellow course members doing the same thing, (3) leading a real class of about an hour in a regular section of an on-going undergraduate course (on a topic to be arranged jointly with the instructor of the course and using whatever teaching methods you deem appropriate to your objectives and setting) and giving/ receiving feedback from two of your classmates doing the same thing; (4) submitting one of your (*real or simulated*) term papers for “plagiarism” review

using available software so you can feel how it works; (5) an exploration of the possibilities of web-based instruction using Blackboard; and (6) a 10 minute presentation on an article of your choice from the journal *Teaching Sociology*. I may modify or substitute some of these as the semester progresses.

It is important to stimulate your interest in and familiarity with the published scholarly literature on teaching in sociology. To that end, each person will be expected to do a single presentation of about 10 minutes in length to inform the class about an article or note published in the journal *Teaching Sociology* (available online from the FSU Library) that you find interesting and relevant. Rather than a typical seminar presentation, where emphasis is on reviewing/ critiquing the theory, data, and methods, I will ask you to organize your presentation around our “applied” purpose – tell us what the contribution is and what it might be good for. You should browse the journal for yourself so you can find your own article to present. We will develop a list and schedule. Your presentations do not have to be keyed to the general topic for that day.

#### **ACADEMIC HONOR CODE:**

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “be honest and truthful and...[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/honorpolicy.htm>.)

#### **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the Student Disability Resource Center; 97 Woodward Avenue, South; Florida State University; Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167; (850) 644-9566 (voice); (850) 644-8504 (TDD); [sdrc@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:sdrc@admin.fsu.edu); <http://www.fsu.edu/~staffair/dean/StudentDisability/>

#### **SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY:**

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

#### **COURSE TOPICS:**

*Week 1 (May 12-14)*

- M Introduction & Overview
- W Personal Goals and Learning Objectives

*Week 2 (May 19-21)*

- M Organizing a Course & the First Class Meeting
- W The Craft of Lecturing

*Week 3 (May 26-28)*

- M *No class* – Memorial Day Holiday
- W Student Centered Teaching (SCT) I: Discussion & Active Learning

*Week 4 (June 2-4)*

- M SCT II: Experiential & Problem Based Learning
- W The Bottom Line: Exams, Grading & Cheating

*Week 5 (June 9-11)*

- M Maintaining Effective Interaction: Sensitive Topics and Problem Students
- W Web-Based Technology - I: Impact on Teaching & Learning  
– *Meet in MCH305 (“PRS”)*

*Week 6 (June 16-18)*

- M Web-Based Technology - II: *Online Class, no face-to-face meeting*
- W Wrap up: Teaching Evaluations & Continual Improvement

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

**Week 1, May 12-14**

**Monday Introduction & Overview**

- What is the course about, why, and for whom?
- Introductions
- Why is teacher training important?
- What are the characteristics of good teaching?
- What resources are available to help become an effective teacher?

*Assignment:*

Begin making arrangements to teach one class meeting (about 1 hour) in a regular undergraduate course, sometime during weeks 3-5 of “B” term. Identify/ approach an instructor, agree on a topic and your broad objectives, and begin planning what you want the students to learn and how you will teach them. Confirm/ document all arrangements with me ASAP, but no later than Wednesday May 21. (Electronic submission on Bb).

Within two days after your class is over, send me a copy of your “lesson plan” (objectives, teaching methods/ materials, and assessments [no more than 2 pages]), with a short “reflection” on your experience (no more than 1 page). (Submit via Bb.)

Two classmates will attend your class to give you feedback on its strengths and offering constructive suggestions (1 page). This will be agreed to and scheduled in class. These

comments should be sent to you via email *and* turned in to me via Bb within one day of the class.

*Reading:* (Except for today, readings should be done in advance of class.)

McKeachie, Chs 1-2

FSU-Instructional Development Services: *Instruction at FSU*. Ch 15:

<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/explore/onlineresources/i@fsu.cfm>

*Optional:*

Sullivan, Teresa (1991) "Making the Graduate Curriculum Explicit." *TS* 19(3):408-13.

### **Wednesday Personal Goals & Learning Objectives**

What are our purposes and goals, and what's our approach?

What is the purpose of a college education? What are my general goals?

Who are our students?

What is my role relationship to my students?

What is my approach to teaching?

What is the importance of teaching with respect to my other professional goals?

*Assignment:*

Indicate your general goals and learning objectives for an introductory-level course you might teach in the future. How would you present these in your syllabus and verbally?

Make them as interesting and valuable to students as possible. Due Friday May 16<sup>th</sup>.

Limit length to one page.

***Guest: Carolyn Sawtell (Teaching as a Graduate Student) (1:30)***

*Reading:*

McKeachie, Chs 23-24

Nilson, Chs 2, 3

FSU-IDS, Ch 6: <http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/explore/onlineresources/i@fsu.cfm>

*FSU Websites:*

Institutional Research (student information):

[http://www.ir.fsu.edu/student/studentinfo.cfm?ID=t\\_studentindicators](http://www.ir.fsu.edu/student/studentinfo.cfm?ID=t_studentindicators)

Criteria for Promotion & Tenure:

<http://www.fsu.edu/%7Edof/facultyhandbook/Ch10/Ch10.4.html>

### **Week 2, May 19-21**

#### **Monday Organizing a Course and the First Class Meeting**

Getting prepared and started.

What awareness and tasks are necessary in preparing my class?

What activities and readings will I require, and how do they connect with my goals?

How do I pick course materials (e.g., textbook vs. original sources)?  
What should my syllabus include?  
What should I do during the first class meeting?

*Assignment:*

Suggest improvement in several syllabi of introductory-level sociology courses, to be made available on the course website. Summarize on one page. Due Friday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

*Reading:*

McKeachie, Chs 3, 12  
Nilson, Ch 4

*FSU Websites:*

FSU Best Practices on Syllabi (includes template & checklist):

<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/explore/bestPractices/syllabi.cfm>

*Optional:*

Wagenaar, Theodore (2004) "Is there a core in sociology?" *TS* 32(1):1-18.

**Wednesday The Craft of Lecturing**

How do we hold student interest and communicate effectively?  
What is the purpose in lecturing?  
What are different patterns of lecture organization?  
What are the ingredients of effective lecturing?

*Assignment - 1:*

Prepare to give a 15-20 minute mini-lecture in class during the next three weeks to teach us something about a teaching-related topic or issue that you believe is both interesting and important. Use any lecturing techniques that are appropriate from our reading and discussion today. Dates/ times will be assigned and possible topics will be discussed and approved in class. Review the semester's outline and think about possible topics for your lecture *before* today's class. Bring a blank VHS tape on the day of your lecture. I will meet privately with you afterward to review your tape and the comments and suggestions received from your classmates.

*Assignment - 2:*

After you have completed your mini-lecture and we have reviewed your tape, write a short "reflection" describing how you put the lecture together, including your goals and background assumptions, and how you would assess its effectiveness. Limit 2 pages. Due: two days after meeting with me, no later than Thursday, June 19.

*Reading:*

McKeachie, Chs 6, 19  
Nilson, Ch 14

*FSU Websites:*

Best Practices in Teaching large classes.

<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/explore/bestPractices/largeclasses.cfm>

### **Week 3, May 26-28**

**Monday**      **No Class – Memorial Day Holiday**

**Wednesday**    **Student Centered Teaching I: Discussion & Active Learning**

How can we facilitate productive and inclusive discussions?

What are the barriers to effective discussion?

How do we teach students to learn through discussion?

How do we promote active learning and critical thinking?

What types of activities and writing assignments will I use in my course, and what will be the rationale and requirements for them?

*Assignment:*

Upload to the Bb “plagiarism” assignment an electronic copy of one of your term papers (*real or simulated*) for submission to Turnitin.com. This is FSU site-licensed software that can be used to deter and detect plagiarism. Due Friday, May 30 (11:59 pm).

*Reading:*

McKeachie, Ch 4, 5, 15

Nilson, Chs 15-16, 20

### **Week 4, June 2-4**

**Monday**      **Student Centered Teaching II. Experiential & Problem Based Learning**

What approaches are covered by these techniques?

How are these approaches useful?

When can these approaches be applied, and what constraints are there?

***Guest: Dr. Irene Padavic (Service Learning) (1:30) --Tentative***

*Sample decision case:* Choose either one. (Class Bb library)

1. “Can Nations Increase Fertility?”
2. “Should the US Allow Gay Adoptions?”

*Reading:*

McKeachie, Chs 17

Nilson, Chs 17-18, 23

*Websites:*

Center for Civic Education & Service: <http://www.fsu.edu/~service/>

FSU on Problem Based Learning:

<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/explore/bestPractices/problembasedlearning.cfm>

**Wednesday The Bottom Line: Exams, Grading, and Cheating.**

What will be the requirements and the nature of my assessment?

What grading scheme will I use and what is my rationale?

What do I do when I think students are cheating?

How do I promote a culture of honor?

*Assignment:*

Add to the goals and learning objectives you developed earlier in the term and finish a complete syllabus for the introductory level course. It should include all the required components per FSU policy, including requirements, number and nature of exams, written assignments, etc, and the grading system. See the FSU “Syllabus Checklist” cited above. As a cover memo to me, lay out the rationale for your decisions. Limit the cover memo to 1 page. Due: Friday, June 13 via electronic submission.

You should also forward your syllabus to two classmates (arranged in class), who will be expected to react to it in no more than one page (follow the philosophy of the “syllabus review” assignment earlier in the semester and offer feedback, including constructive suggestions) and return their comments directly to you via email as well as submit them to me via Bb by Thursday, June 19.

*Reading:*

McKeachie, Chs 7-11

Nilson, Chs 28, 29, 30

*FSU Websites:*

FSU toolkit on plagiarism:

<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/explore/bestPractices/turnitin.cfm>

Academic Honor Code: <http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/forms/honorpolicy.pdf>

**Week 5, June 9-11**

**Monday Maintaining Effective Interaction: Cultural Diversity, Sensitive Topics and “Problem Students.”**

How should I handle confrontations and difficult students?

How can I handle students with problems?

How can we handle sensitive topics and multiple diversities?

***Guest: Dr. Candace Hinson, Professor of Sociology, Tallahassee Community College  
(Faculty Careers: Community College Teaching) (3:30)***

*Reading:*

McKeachie, Chs 13, 14, 25

Nilson, Chs 8

Websites:

ASA Code of Ethics (especially #18)

<http://www.asanet.org/galleries/default-file/Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf>

FSU Student Conduct Code:

[http://registrar.fsu.edu/student\\_handbook/](http://registrar.fsu.edu/student_handbook/)

FSU Dean of Faculties “Academic Freedom”

<http://www.fsu.edu/%7Edof/academicfreedom.htm>

**Wednesday Web Based Courses: Impact on Teaching and Learning.**

How has teaching been affected by web technology?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of online and distance technology?

How can face-to-face teaching be improved by web technology?

What are the benefits of a “hybrid” format?

**\*\*\*MEET IN MCH 305 @ 1:30. Dr. Annette Jones, Center for Teaching and Learning, will give a special tutorial on Personal Response Systems (“clickers”). We will meet for about an hour and then continue class back in BEL.**

PRS at FSU: <http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/explore/bestPractices/prs.cfm>

*Peruse this website before today’s workshop. If you have time, watch some of the PRS videos and check out the tutorials.*

*Assignment:*

Participate in online exercises per instructions in class. Due Friday June 13 (11:59 pm).

*Reading:*

McKeachie, Ch 18

Nilson, 22

*FSU Websites:*

“Twelve Simple things to do with Blackboard:”

[http://online.fsu.edu/learningresources/handbook/2003\\_SimpleThingsToDoBb6.pdf](http://online.fsu.edu/learningresources/handbook/2003_SimpleThingsToDoBb6.pdf)

Read story/ listen to podcast on our hybrid version of Introduction to Sociology:

<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/archive/indexMore3.cfm>

*Optional*

Twigg, C. (2003) “New Models for Online Learning.” *Educause Review* (Sept/ Oct): 28-38. (Class Bb Library)

**Week 6, June 16-18**

**Monday Web-Based Technology - II: Online Class (no face-to-face meeting)**

What is it like to be a student in an online course?

What kinds of online lessons “work” for me?  
Am I prepared to be responsible for my own learning?

*Assignment:*

I will make available online materials from two of my classes, and you will have the opportunity to do one lesson in each. (Due Tuesday June 17 – 11:59 pm)

*Readings:*

McKeachie, Ch 22

FSU-IDS, Ch 10: <http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/explore/onlineresources/i@fsu.cfm>

**Wednesday Wrap up: Teaching Evaluations and Continual Improvement.**

Is the “student as consumer” model appropriate and useful?

Student Ratings of Teaching: “Are the inmates in charge of the asylum?”

How can we use mid-semester surveys to improve our classes?

What did we learn, how do we feel, and where do we go from here?

*Readings:*

McKeachie, Ch 26

Nilson, Ch 31

*FSU Websites:*

Strategies for improving student ratings:

<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/collaborate/modify/index.cfm>

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