

# ***Teaching in the Social Sciences, Business & Education: Recitations and Lectures***

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My first teaching methods teacher – Dr. Wycoff – used to say,

Teaching is easy. Just ...

say “yes” whenever you can...

say “no” whenever you have to ...

& never, ever say either out of laziness or fatigue!!!

Great advice – but I’d like to add a few suggestions &  
details...

## **5 things I really want you to remember when you’re teaching...**

**#1 Impression Management – an unabashed beginning**

**#2 How well you and your students “do” starts with their  
impressions & expectations**

**#3 Being a GTA is a “balancing act”**

**#4 Most of your student’s aren’t you !**

**#5 Make active & informed decisions about your teaching &  
be on the same page as your instructor !!**

**#1 Impression Management – an unabashed beginning**

**You are who they think you are !!!**

So...

Be good !

Be sure they know you are good !!!

**Early to bed. Early to rise. Work your ass off!!  
And, advertise!!!!!!!**

**Three Audiences**

1. Students
2. Peers
3. Evaluators

**Four Aspects**

1. Lectures
2. Assignments
3. Exams
4. Interactions w/ students

Do the “Wanna Be” handout

## The Teacher You Wanna & Don't Wanna Be Known As: Defining Features of You as a Teacher

As a teacher you have at least three “audiences” who talk about you and your teaching and formally or informally evaluate you. The impressions these folks have will help or hinder your progress toward being a good & successful teacher.

**Early to bed. Early to rise. Work your ass off!! And, advertise!!!!!!**

Tell two things that you want each audience to say about your **lectures**...

Students	Other Teachers	Chair/Promotion Committee/Dean
1.		1.
2.		2.

Tell two things that you **don't** want each audience to say about your **lectures**...

Students	Other Teachers	Chair/Promotion Committee/Dean
1.		1.
2.		2.

Tell two things that you want each audience to say about your **assignments**...

Students	Other Teachers	Chair/Promotion Committee/Dean
1.		1.
2.		2.

Tell two things that you **don't** want each audience to say about your **assignments**...

Students	Other Teachers	Chair/Promotion Committee/Dean
1.		1.
2.		2.

Tell two things that you want each audience to say about your **exams**...

Students	Other Teachers	Chair/Promotion Committee/Dean
1.		1.
2.		2.

Tell two things that you **don't** want each audience to say about your **exams**...

Students	Other Teachers	Chair/Promotion Committee/Dean
1.		1.
2.		2.

Tell two things that you want each audience to say about your **interactions with students**...

Students	Other Teachers	Chair/Promotion Committee/Dean
1.		1.
2.		2.

Tell two things that you **don't** want each audience to say about your **interactions with students**...

Students	Other Teachers	Chair/Promotion Committee/Dean
1.		1.
2.		2.

Three things to remember...

1. They are not you!
2. Know what they need to know!
3. You're sharing them!

## #2 How well you and your students “do” starts with their impressions & expectations

Research into student course & instructor evaluations revealed that one of the best predictors of student evaluations was how well the course and instructor met student’s “expectations” about:

- content of the course
- examination format
- amount of work
- type of homework, assignments & papers
- teacher’s “personality”

Not any huge surprises !!

Almost by mistake a few researchers discovered that one of the best predictors of **student performance** was how well the course and instructor met student’s “expectations” about:

- content of the course
- examination format
- amount of work
- type of homework, assignments & papers
- teacher’s “personality”

Likely that students work harder when expectations met!

This is great → the best way to improve performance meshes with the best way to improve course evals !!!!

What this means is that you should “create” the expectations your students have about the course & the reci/lab !!!

Don’t expect your students to “get it” → instead “give it to them”!

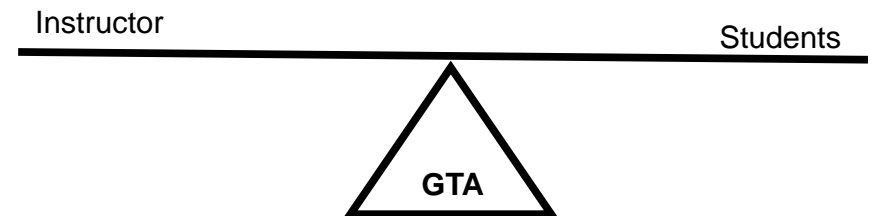
Tell them, probably several times, the:

- content of the course
  - & why that content is important to their major and future
- examination format
  - & why that format will allow them to learn the info better
- amount and type of work
  - & defend each bit of it – telling them why they need to know it (probably so they can learn cooler stuff later)

**The better they understand the “whats” and “whys” of the course and the reci/lab, the harder they are likely to work, and the better things will go for them and for you !!!**

## #3 Being a GTA in a reci/lab is a “balancing act”

Balancing Act Part #1



You have to find a way to “support” and be “useful” to the Instructor and the Students ... at the same time !!!

You will be the most useful to your students by being sure you know what the rules and expectations are and consistently communicating & enforcing them!

If you don't like a rule or a ruling, take it up privately with the professor.

Avoid the "us vs. the professor" game with students

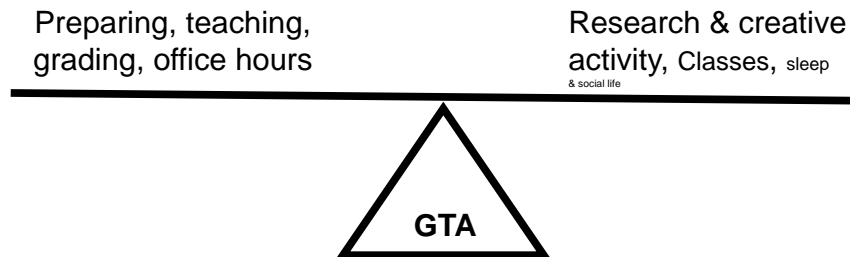
- faculty will see it as "treason"
- students will "tell on you"

Talk with your instructor ahead of time about who makes what decisions for class and lab assignments, assessments, grades, rules, etc.

Avoid the "Mommy vs. Daddy" game with students

- be sure you are **CONSISTENTLY MAKING** the decisions you're supposed to be making
- be sure you are **CONSISTENTLY SENDING** students to the instructor for those decisions she/he is supposed to be making

Balancing Act Part #2



You have to find a way to be "both of you" at the same time !!!

Best → plan your reci/lab schedule to mesh with your class schedule! Be sure you don't have papers to grade and papers to write at the same time !

More common → start early on your exam prep and paper writing

Be sure you know the grading schedule your instructor wants!

- How quickly must graded work be returned?
- Must it all be handed back at the same time?
- Can you make "extra grading time" by asking the instructor to hand work back in class "between labs" → **Check first !!!!**

#### #4 Most of your student's aren't you !

##### They Aren't You -- Part #1

You're in graduate school, you went to undergraduate school, took the classes, read the books, thought about the stuff...

**Don't start your instruction from "where you are"!!**

**Be sure to start your instruction from "where they are" !**

**If you're are teaching a course for a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> time -0 remember they haven't had it before!!!**

Read the book, talk with instructor and talk with past TAs of the reci/lab to figure this out !!!

##### They Aren't You -- Part #2

You went to undergraduate school and then came on to graduate school – there's something about the content or material that excites you and makes you want to learn more!!

Most undergraduates, especially in 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year courses haven't had that "epiphany" yet – they're probably wrong about the content, meaning & importance of the course!!

**Don't assume they know the course content!**

**Don't assume they "appreciate" the course !**

**Expect to "carry them" motivationally !**

- **The best TAs are cheerleaders & motivational coaches !!!**

#### #5 Make active & informed decisions about your teaching & be on the same page as your instructor !!

You'll have to make dozens of choices about the course content, format & style, as well as dozens more about each course meeting & assignment. Think about the alternatives and remember...

• **talk with your instructor about who makes choices**

- try to "be innovative" and to "fit in" at the same time

• **build expectations and "sell" your choices**

- the better you do this the better they and you will do!

• **remember "they're not you"**

- don't do something just because "you liked it" or "it worked for you" when you were a student

#### 1. What is the "curricular role" of the course & lab/reci ?

- Foundation course ?
- Content Course ?
- Cut Course ?

How much you "give them" and how much "you expect from them" depends on the curricular role of the course.

- Be sure you know!
- Be sure they know !
- Be sure you're consistent!

**2. What “level” or “type” of learning are you looking for - for each concept, skill, assessment or assignment?**

- Rote knowledge – vocabulary & memorization
- Application – putting info to use
- Analytic & Synthetic – taking apart & combining elements
- Creative – generating new combos, ideas & things
- Evaluative – evaluating and improving work by others

Make sure you know – usually by asking your professor – what is the learning goal of each “thing”

- match how you teach to what you want them to learn
- match how you teach with how you test/grade
- match how you test/grade to what you want them to learn

**3. How do “learning” and “application” go together for each topic / skill ?**

- application can be a powerful motivator to learn things
- learning to apply something can improve the depth of understanding

Remember they don't know everything you do – be careful what you ask them to apply before you really teach it to them!!

- where should they be learning? Class or lab/reci?
- where should they be applying? Class or lab/reci?
- think about these & talk with your instructor

**4. How do you balance teaching “content” & “skills” ?**

- What do you have to teach them so they can do what you want them to do?
- What skills can you “sneak in” that they'll use in later courses or years from now (even if not “part of course”) ?
- How can you get them to do “what best students do”?

Skill deficits can look like “learning deficits”

- library, computer, software, & presentations skills
- how to study for different kinds of learning
- teaching them the things that you learned the hard way !!

**5. What does a grade mean in your class & lab/reci ??**

- Mastery vs. Differentiation assessment & grading
- Be sure instructional choices match grading intent?
- Often goes back to the curricular role of the course

Great disagreement among instructors of the relationship between teaching and assessment!

Grade distributions can vary widely with the different approaches!!!

Be very sure you and your instructor are on the same page about this.

Be very sure you and the other TAs are doing similar things (or that the instructor is good with the differences)

## 6. Relationship between teaching & assessment, cont...

- **“Assessments & assignments that capture what’s been taught” vs. “Teaching that presents what will be assigned & assessed”**
- **AKA “Responsive testing” vs. “Backward design”**

Using Backward Design requires lots of planning and up-front knowledge of what you are trying to accomplish and how you will assess what you/they have accomplished. Can be hard to do when first teaching, but an important goal.

- rem the power of expectations & “selling” what’s coming!
- be sure you and your instructor are on the same page!

**Do the “Blending – Bending” handout**

**Blending Our Hopes & Dreams with Theirs:**  
Telling Students Your Instructional Goals & Strategies to Promote Their Investment & Performance  
(i.e., Bending Their Hopes & Dreams to Yours)

Pick one course you teach to answer the following. The course? \_\_\_\_\_

1. Tell 3 things do you want them to value about the content of your course?
2. What community(ies) are your students joining? What do they need to know to join successfully?
3. What do they ... (give one good example)
  - Know they need to know ?
  - Need to know about what they know they need to know ?
  - Not know they need to know ?

Also...

- What's special about the curricular role of your course ?
- What skill should they be acquiring during your course ?
- What can you teach (rather than wait to occur to them) about "how experts do it" ?
- 4. What instructional strategies should you ...
  - "let them in on" & why ?
  - "keep to yourself" & why ?



# Using Action Research & Continuous Improvement to Populate your Teaching Portfolio:

## An Empirical Approach to Improving Your Teaching and Getting Credit for It

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## 2 Premises of this presentation

1. Graduate students generally receive considerably more instruction and mentoring about how to become a good researcher & creative producer than about how to become a good teacher.

2. The good news for those of us who really want to become good teachers is that the process of acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills is very similar for the two.

Stated differently ...

The same process you've learned to use to develop, implement, and test "your next research/creative idea" can also be used to develop, implement, and test to "your next teaching improvement" and "teaching portfolio item".

## What goes in your Teaching Portfolio???

- Syllabi
- Lecture materials
- Assignments
- Exams
- Teaching Evaluations

## What goes in your Teaching Portfolio???

Let's do better...

Syllabi, with...

- ... reflections about options & choices made
- ... peer review of structure, content & reflections

Lecture materials, with...

- ...description of pedagogical reasoning
- ...peer review of structure and content choices
- ...reflections on self- and peer review

Assignments, with...

- ...descriptions of integration with learning materials
- ...reflections on student performance/understanding
- ...peer review of structure, content & integration
- ...reflections on self- and peer review

Let's do better...

Exams, with...

- ...descriptions of integration with learning materials & assignments
- ...reflections on student performance/understanding
- ...peer review of structure, content & integration
- ...reflections on self- and peer review

Teaching Evaluations, with...

- ...reflections on typical & untypical ratings, rating range
- ...peer review of evaluations
- ...reflections on peer review

Action Research & Continuous Improvement Efforts, with...

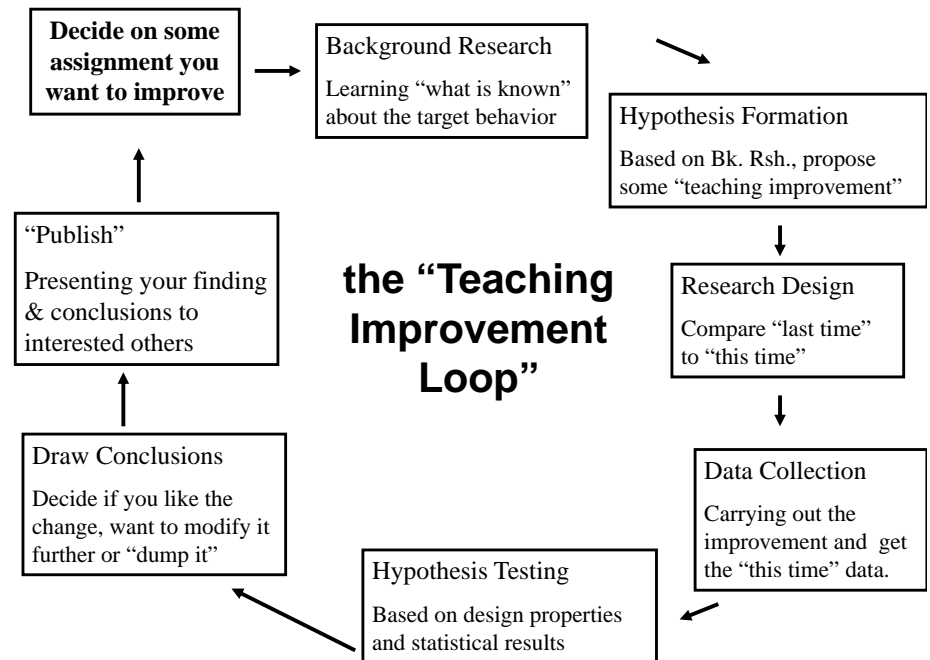
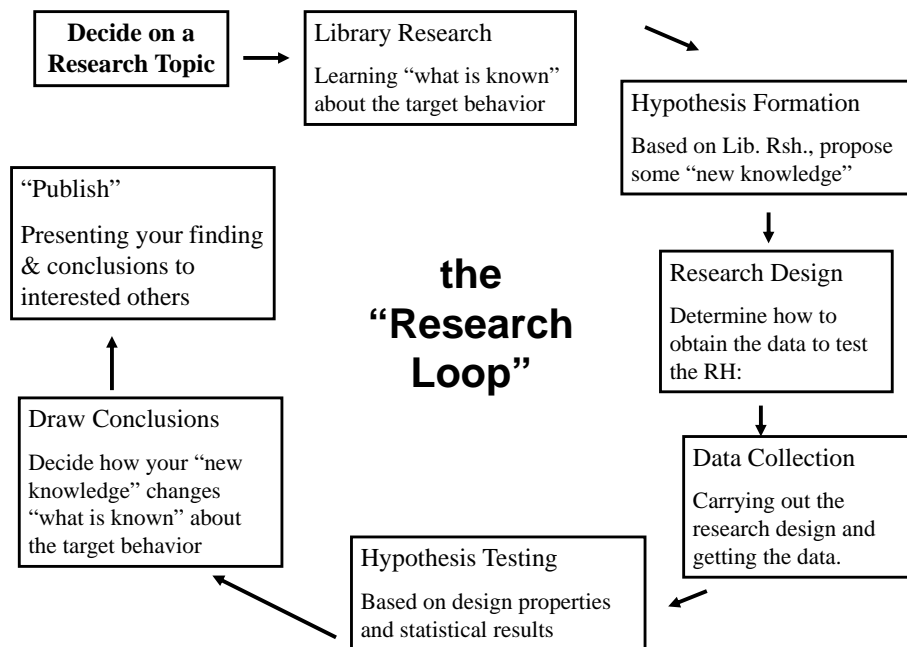
- ... reflections of improvement goals
- ... report of improvement efforts and results
- ... peer review of efforts and results
- ... reflections on peer review

“Action Research”

- Research to solve problems or create improvement
- Ongoing programmatic efforts to document successful amelioration or remediation
- Informal or semi-formal empirical approach to answering “What happens when I...” questions

“Continuous Improvement”

- Ongoing effort to improve and document improvement of products, processes or services
- Integrates incremental improvement and breakthrough improvements to augment existing performance standards
- Identification, reduction and elimination of sub-optimal processes



We can improve our teaching by doing the same types of things we routinely do as part of our research...

**Exploring** -- find out “what’s works” for other teachers or think of things that “someone should try”

**Expanding** -- select content, technique, or technology you want to add to your repertoire

**Evaluating** -- deciding whether or not the improvement worked

**Exchanging** – presenting your results to teachers, formally and informally

## Exploring ...

- attend teaching related presentations on Campus
- take “teaching” classes
- reading the “Teaching of ... “ journals in your areas
- attending the “teaching of” presentations at conferences
- attend teaching conferences
- informal discussion with other teachers
- keep a “teaching ideas” journal

## Expanding ...

Decide how you want to “teach better” !!!

Version #1-- Pick something that “didn’t go well last time”...

- Lecture, homework, assignment, exam, part of eval...
- How could you make it better??
- Best suited when you teach same course 2+ semesters
- This time = “Experimental” or “Improvement” condition
- Last time = “Comparison” or “Control”

Version #2 – Pick something you “want to try 2 different ways”...

- Lecture, homework, assignment, exam, part of eval...
- How could you make it better??
- Works even when only have course for 1 semester

## Expanding ...

- beware changing too many things at once
  - multiple changes make evaluation more difficult
- consider a “programmatic” approach to teaching improvement
- when considering “an improvement” think about ....
  - **what** will be improved (knowledge, application, critical thinking?)
  - **for whom** will it be improved (all, remedial, advanced?)
  - how will you **evaluate** “improvement” ?
  - the time, technology, and other “**costs**”
  - is this a **good time/topic/class** to try this improvement ?

## Expanding ...

Things to consider as you look for ways to expand and improve your teaching ...

### “Big Picture” changes

- **Hybrid Classes (mixing in-class & online activities)**
- **Flip Teaching or Backward Classroom**
- **Discovery Learning**
- **Peer Instruction**
- **Student-chosen Curriculum**
- **Laboratory meetings**

Any one of these can be a “Teaching Experiment”

## Expanding ...

Things to consider as you look for ways to expand and improve your teaching ...

### Adding “structured intermediate tasks” to assignments

- **Jargon → Cognitive Structure → Action Scripts**
- **Precise’ → Sentence Outline → Draft → Final Draft**
- **Prelude Assignment before Lecture/Reading**
- **Peer Review of homework, writing, exam preps**
- **“What to study” assignment before exam preparation**

Any one of these can be a “Teaching Experiment”

## Expanding ...

Things to consider as you look for ways to expand and improve your teaching ...

### Increasing Information Flow to & From Students

- **Individual Response Technology (clickers)**
- **1-Minute Papers**
- **Just In Time Teaching**
- **Barely Late Teaching**
- **Essay Gallery**
- **Audio/video files**

Any one of these can be a “Teaching Experiment”

## Expanding ...

Things to consider as you look for ways to expand and improve your teaching ...

### Increasing “Skill / Building” Component of Assignments

- **Poster presentations instead of term papers**
- **Web pages instead of term papers**
- **Research proposals instead of literature reviews**
- **Pilot studies instead of literature reviews**
- **Adding audio/video & web links files to PowerPoint**

Any one of these can be a “Teaching Experiment”

## Evaluating ...

- how did it “feel” while you were doing it & what do you think was the student reaction? (teaching journal)
- evaluation by students (important to try to separate evaluating “you” from evaluating “what you did”)
- student assessment (data)
  - often won’t be as “clean” as your research data -- but still useful
  - grade on the target assignment, related examinations & assignments
- peer-review
  - have colleagues...
    - look over your materials and give feedback
    - have classroom visits during the
    - review your evaluation of what happened

## Evaluating ...

- There are lots of different ways a new technique can be “an improvement”
- The combination we usually hope for ...
  - requires less class time
  - requires less out-of-class time for students
  - students like it better
  - students perform better
  - broadly applicable technique (to other teaching topics)
  - easily transportable technique (to other teachers)
- Need to consider the “tradeoffs” of a new technique !!

## Evaluating ...

- “How well something works” often depends upon **how** it is evaluated ...
  - Consider evaluating both “immediate” and “long-term” effects
  - Consider evaluating not just “knowledge acquisition” but also ability to apply that information and to incorporate it into critical thinking skills
- “How well something works” often depends upon **who** is evaluated ...
  - Are your data from the “target audience” ???
  - Are your data from the “target behaviors” ???

## Evaluating ...

- Beware abandoning a technique (etc.) too hastily ...
  - even “classic effects” don’t replicate every time (especially with “young” researchers/teachers)
  - the first time you try something will seldom produce the “best possible” version of it -- be willing to “tinker” before giving up
  - action research often lacks sample size, and so, statistical power & sensitivity – look beyond the “p-value”

## Exchanging ...

- This is where most of us get a little nervous ...

There is an “in-public” component to this that may take some getting used to. But consider that few folks keep their research findings to themselves, so why keep your teaching “findings” to yourself ?

- Some things you won’t want to hear (but probably will) when talking to others about your teaching ...
  - “Everybody knows about that!”
  - “That didn’t work for me!”
  - “Yeah it may work, but its not worth the effort to change...”

## more about Exchanging ...

- The “peer review” process offers several advantages...
  - opportunity to interact with “interested others”
  - provides important things to include in your teaching portfolio
  - provides a “paper trail” of you efforts and accomplishments
- You might also consider “going public” with your efforts.
  - departmental “brown bag” lunches
  - get-togethers sponsored by TLC and other groups
  - conferences (more and more research conferences have “teaching of” sessions)
  - electronic or journal publication

## Teaching Improvement: EEEE

### 1. Selection

Identify some assignment that you would like to modify to improve student learning and performance?

Class

Purpose of the class

Homework, Assignment, or Exam

**Topical Content of the Assignment** -- what topical knowledge would you like them to acquire during this assignment?

**Skill-building Content of the Assignment** -- what academic or technical skills would you like them to develop during this assignment?

**Intended Improvement in the Assignment** -- what do you hope to improve (performance, expand topical content, expand skill-building content, etc.)

**Target Students** -- for which students is this improvement targeted?

### 2. EEEE

**Exploring** -- where can you get ideas about how to improve this assignment?

- People?
- Pubs?
- Conferences?
- Personal?

**Expanding** – what improvement would you like to try – just one (or a bit of a combo – but don't get crazy!!!)

**Evaluating** – how will you evaluate whether the “new” assignment is “better” than the earlier one?

- Informal instructor evaluation -- “feel”?
- student evaluation & feedback?
- assignment grade?
- performance on related exam, other assignment, etc.?

**Exchanging** – who would like to hear about what you've tried and found?

- Supervisor/advisor?
- Department? (graduate or faculty Brown Bag?)
- Conference?
- Publication?