

The Changing Role of TAs: On-line vs. In-class

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7-Mar-14

Reimer - 1

PPT equipment

Objectives

- Inform the audience regarding a technique for online learning.
- Provide a rationale for the design of the technique.
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the technique.

Consider generalizable lessons from the use of this technique

Approach

- Presentation
- Q & A

Title: The Changing Role of Teaching Assistants: On-line vs. In-class courses

Abstract: The role of TAs is dramatically altered in the day-to-day activities of an on-line course. Instead of supporting the instructor in the classroom, TAs provide the primary points of contact with students. A greater proportion of the instructor load shifts to TA support. In this session we will explore some of the implications of this change: from techniques to manage the changing demands and the reorganization of pedagogy required to the re-evaluation of contract demands.

Bill Reimer is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. He has been teaching the eConcordia course entitled *Canadian Society* every semester since the summer of 2008. His current research examines changes in rural communities, rural-urban interdependence, comparative regional policy, rural immigration, and the impacts of wildfires on communities. Details can be found via <http://billreimer.ca>.

Soci 282 – Canadian Society



CANADIAN SOCIETY

Welcome to Canadian Society

This course will introduce students to the study of Canadian society from a sociological point of view. Several themes useful for the analysis of Canadian society will be introduced and illustrated with respect to past and contemporary events. Students will be asked to make use of these themes and perspectives in their own analyses.

Bill's Blog

There are no blog entries at the moment.

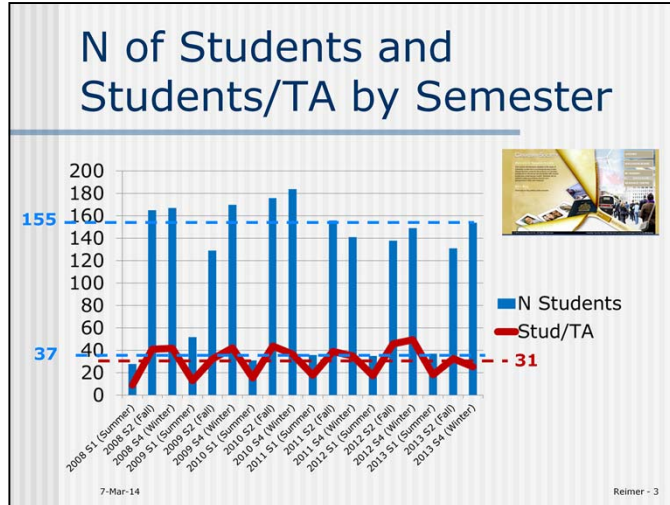
LESSONS

DISCUSSION BOARD

MY AGENDA

RESOURCE CENTRE

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- Number of students per class is in blue
 - [C]Ranges around 37 in the summer and [C] about 155 in the fall and winter
 - Ranges from 28 in my first semester to 184 in 2010 –Winter
- Over the 18 semesters the number of students per TA has been about 31 on average
 - Ranges from 9 students/TA in my first semester to 50 in 2012-Winter

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LESSONS

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RESOURCE CENTRE

10 Lessons in 13 weeks

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7-Mar-14 Reimer - 4

Course is organized in the following manner:

- 10 Lessons in 13 weeks
- 9 Discussion Board sessions (24% of final grade)
- 8 Grades Tasks (4 Short Essays) (37% of final grade)
- 1 Final Exam (39% of final grade)

CANADIAN SOCIETY LESSONS

Protecionism which shows how Canada needs other countries to make money (Hiller, 2006). However, other countries need Canada as well because of the important resources it has to offer. As mentioned in Dr. Bill Reimer's audio clip in Lesson 4 (slide 8), he states that 27% of U.S. trade is with Canada, which just proves how important Canada is to other countries. Canada has an advantage because its resources are in demand so it will continue to have economic progress, regardless of its defence and protection methods. Having trading laws that protect Canada will only bring security to the country and help improve relationships that can benefit its trading power.

Hiller, H.H. (2006). Canadian Society: A Macroanalysis, 5th Ed. Toronto: Pearson Education Canada Inc. Pages 68-78.
Reimer, B. (2014). Lesson 4: Canadian Autonomy. Montreal, Quebec: Concordia University, SOCI282. Lecture 4 Slides.

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9 Discussion Board Questions (24%)

be implemented. get between value and gives n products where old, revenue form ry that are still

weak and cannot compete with international companies. Protection in the form of Subsidies could be given to these small local companies.

Reference:
Hiller, H.H. Canadian Society: A Macro Analysis, 5 ed. Toronto: Pearson/Prentice Hall, (2006).
Reimer, B. (2014). Lesson 4: Canadian Autonomy. Montreal, Quebec: Concordia University, SOCI282.

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I believe that Canada should be protectionist of their trading with other countries. Trade is a major factor in maintaining a stable economy on Canada. Canada exports a lot of to other countries. We trade many of our natural resources, such as our oil to the United States. We need protectionist in order to have full control on what we do with our natural resources and in order to ensure economic growth in Canada. Our natural resources in Canada produce a major chunk of the jobs available in Canada. Without protectionists, these jobs could be outsource to other countries. Canada needs protectionism to maintain stable work flow.

7-Mar-14 Reimer - 5

The image is a screenshot of a website titled "CANADIAN SOCIETY". A central white box with a red border contains the text "4 Tasks and 4 Short Essays (24%)". The website background includes several sections: "LESSONS" at the top right, "BOARD" and "ENTRE" on the right side, and a "Map of Canada" at the bottom right with red location pins. A copyright notice "© 2014 eConcordia.com Inc. All Rights Reserved." is at the bottom left, and "7-Mar-14" and "Reimer - G" are at the bottom center.

4 Tasks and 4 Short Essays (24%)

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<h2>Two Venues</h2>	
In-class	On-line
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Weekly cycle ■ Presentations ■ Workshops/Groups ■ Primary contact with students: Instructor ■ TAs support Instructor ■ TA Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Course design ■ Presentation ■ Group work ■ Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Semester cycle ■ On-line material ■ Discussion Boards ■ Primary contact with students: TAs ■ Instructor supports TAs ■ TA Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Online discussions ■ Evaluation feedback ■ Evaluation
<small>7-Mar-14</small>	<small>Reimer - 7</small>

See slide plus:

- TA-Instructor
 - More of my time is spent with TAs:
 - Preparing tools for working with students
 - Advising regarding student requests, etc.
 - Helping with evaluation

Two Venues

I "Once they've viewed your lectures and read what you've assigned for them, I really felt as if I could have a relationship with the students independent of you, rather than having to mediate a relationship between the two of you."

- Presentation
- Group work
- Evaluation
- Online discussions
- Evaluation feedback
- Evaluation

7-Mar-14 Reimer - 8

See slide plus:

- TA-Instructor
 - More of my time is spent with TAs:
 - Preparing tools for working with students
 - Advising regarding student requests, etc.
 - Helping with evaluation

Two Venues

"I think you can LEARN more about teaching as a TA in an in-class course despite the drawbacks (if you're with the right professor that maybe treats it mre as an apprenticeship), whereas I felt as if I gained genuine EXPERIENCE as a TA from your on-line course; it feels much more like a job than an academic job training program."

See slide plus:

- TA-Instructor
 - More of my time is spent with TAs:
 - Preparing tools for working with students
 - Advising regarding student requests, etc.
 - Helping with evaluation

Challenges

- Teacher training
 - Course design
 - Small group dynamics
- Labour relations
 - Description of tasks
 - Student load

7-Mar-14 Reimer - 10

These venues are sufficiently different to warrant a re-evaluation of several aspects of pedagogy and labour relations

- Teacher training
 - Course design and preparation: Lesson plans
 - If the course is designed and prepared ahead of time, how do TAs become involved in the process?
 - How do they learn about in-class pedagogy?
 - Group discussions and the dynamics of small group pedagogy
 - Discussion boards provide a limited set of skills – many non-generalizable to face-to-face discussions
- Labour relations
 - TRAC pays my TAs as “Grade 2 Tutorial Leaders”
 - “A Grade 2 Tutorial Leader is responsible for a subset of the duties described...for a Grade 1 Teaching Assistant.”
 - “A Grade 1 Tutorial Leader **meets with groups of students** to present aspects of the course material. She/he **prepares the material, answers questions, grades submissions** associated with the course, **holds office hours** for individual or group consultation, may assist in **grading exams**, may be expected to **attend classes or seminars**, and may perform **other duties** as required.”
 - It is unclear why TAs for online course such as mine are not considered Grade 1 TAs.
 - They don’t meet with students on a face-to-face basis but they are the front end of contact on-line.
 - They don’t hold office hours but they regularly respond to e-mails about all aspects of the course (high e-mail load).
 - They can’t prepare the material as it stands, but they have provided generic material that has been integrated into subsequent semesters.
 - In Soc/Anth TAs are paid according to a formula of 2 hours per student for the semester.
 - The instructor can divide it according to their (and the TAs’) wishes.
 - I have experimented with several ways of dividing this amount.
 - Several TAs have requested the maximum number of hours (went as high as 50) – but I have discovered that this is too many – in spite of the students’ best intentions. There are too many other demands on their time and the thoroughness and timeliness of their work suffers.
 - Settled on a number of about 25 to 30. The TAs identify this as manageable and still financially valuable.

Initiatives?

- Teacher training
 - Include open modules
 - Include more real-time discussions
 - Require in-class experience
- Labour relations
 - Recognize time for teacher training
 - Modify TRAC to recognize roles

7-Mar-14

Reimer - 11

I am now on the lookout for ideas for dealing with these challenges. Will provide some examples and invite other suggestions.

- Teacher training
 - Course preparation
 - Include open modules in the course for TAs to prepare.
 - E.g. Impacts of trade on Canadian society: a module on some aspect such as electronic goods, East Coast fish, Fort McMurray, food prices, 9/11
 - TAs could prepare lesson plans and produce modules using low-tech methods and tools (minimize load on eConcordia technical services)
 - Group dynamics
 - Use of Adobe Connect or similar technology to simulate the dynamics of real-time discussion (with lesson plans)
 - Require a TA to have in-class experience over the life of their grad program (suggested by one of my TAs)
- Labour relations
 - Modify contract to reflect additional time for teacher training (see above)
 - Modify contract to reflect modified roles for on-line courses

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LESSONS

DISCUSSION BOARD

Your Experiences and Suggestions?

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7-Mar-14 Reimer - 12