Collaborative Teaching Project in the Humanities

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Main changes to CTP in 2018-19

1. CTP, as a new DLCL Focal Group, will invite 2-3 speakers per year to spark discussions around teaching and learning that are open to the whole community. In this way, small group discussions of pedagogy among CTP teams will be broadened to benefit everyone who teaches humanities at Stanford.
   In addition, CTP will actively collaborate with the DLCL’s Humanities Education Focal Group, which regularly invites speakers to present on issues in current humanities education, ranging from pedagogy, to program building, to how to think about the humanities in a changing world. CTP participants will be encouraged to draw on these speakers and their work for their small group discussions and readings; and CTP will host one or more joint events and discussions with Humanities Education.

2. Two of the CTP teams meetings per year will be for GSs only, with facilitation by VPTL as requested by the GSs. Such meetings will allow GSs to discuss their concerns and challenges even more candidly than they might with faculty, and will also encourage them to take action to make sure their own learning goals are reached.
   In addition, each CTP team will be encouraged to meet with VPTL consultants to formulate and discuss their learning goals, strategies, and self-evaluation.

3. The DLCL’s Job Market Workshop will hold sessions on how CTP can lead to a more substantial teaching portfolio, and also how the CTP experience can be a key starting point for creating an “alt-ac” resume. Job Market Workshop faculty will draw on plenary CTP discussions to help students craft teaching statements and portfolios that demonstrate their ability to think critically and knowledgeably about pedagogy. Chris Golde from BEAM will lead a workshop in which graduate students look at job ads, both within and beyond academia, and learn to think creatively about how their career goals and experience can match up to them.
   Slightly longer term, we plan for CTP to host a teaching portfolio workshop, which may be open to students in CTP but also alums of CTP or students who are planning to apply.

4. We will implement new assessment procedures, to gage how CTP is working for undergraduates, as well as CGs and Fs. This will include some brainstorming with VPTL as to how to best assess goals and outcomes, using surveys but also small group meetings. Solid assessment procedures are important to the future funding of CTP, so we will focus some of our meeting time on these as well.
Background on CTP

Since 2012, the Collaborative Teaching Project (CTP), based in the DLCL but open to all Humanities Departments at Stanford, has supported Stanford faculty and graduate students who wish to design and offer together team-taught courses in the humanities, with the twofold goal of preparing graduate students for careers as liberal arts educators, and of helping faculty renew their teaching and mentoring. CTP is thus an innovative way for Stanford faculty to form their graduate students into expert teachers, while at the same time engaging in a sustained and critical reflection on their own teaching practices. Since group meetings are key to CTP, this also creates a campus-wide conversation among faculty and graduate students about best teaching practices in the humanities. Most important, since these practices are mostly immediately implemented in a collaborative setting, they can be quickly evaluated and adjusted. Thus, this campus-wide conversation, in turn, results in research and innovations in teaching and learning that reach beyond Stanford to the academic community of humanities teachers.

Concretely, CTP facilitates and funds collaborations between one faculty member and one or two graduate students in order to co-teach a course. The graduate students (GSs) and their faculty mentor (F) work together on as many aspects of the course as possible, including syllabus, gathering and choosing materials, preparing assignments, lectures, presentations, class activities, and other in-class events, grading and feedback, evaluation of the course itself, self-evaluation, and so on. Thus, while each course is unique and thus the exact format of collaboration can vary quite a bit, what makes CTP innovative is that GSs are not TAs, and are therefore not expected to take over a limited number of specific tasks, while Fs reserve others for themselves; to the contrary, GSs are encouraged to practice as many aspects of creating, teaching, and evaluating a course as possible. Accordingly, the application for CTP, to be prepared jointly by F and GCs (attached separately) requires that the format of collaboration be clearly specified. Each CTP course is also encouraged to fulfill as many learning goals as possible, for both GSs and Fs (see list below).

In addition to co-teaching, all Fs and GCs are required to meet regularly to reflect on their experiences and discuss cutting-edge research on teaching and learning. The CTP cohort considers some of the latest breakthroughs in higher education pedagogy and explores how these ideas apply to the Stanford classroom. Many of the discussions touch on how instructors can best implement student engagement techniques in their own work, and how they can develop further as teachers. While some group meetings are limited to the CTP cohort and provide immediate support and feedback to teaching teams, others are open to all faculty and graduate students, who thus have the opportunity to participate in this intense back-and-forth between pedagogical theory and practice. There are generally 9 meetings per academic year. About one third center on sharing of strategies and experiences among the teams, usually focused around one or two short readings on pedagogical research that seem especially relevant to that day's discussion (e.g. a reading on how to design a syllabus backward from learning goals may be paired with a discussion of how this is actually working in ongoing courses). Two meetings per year are reserved for GSs only, who may choose to ask for VPTL assistance, in order for them to share candidly their experience of teaching with faculty and their goals and expectations, as well as how to achieve them. In addition, one group meeting is reserved for evaluation and feedback about CTP itself. The other half of the group meetings are open to the Stanford community, and revolve around a specific issue in teaching and
learning, which may be evoked via a common reading and/or an invited speaker (e.g. a veteran teacher and/or teaching and learning expert who works in a small college may be invited to spark a discussion on the specific requirements for teaching effectively in this context).

**Goals**

Teams are encouraged to discuss these learning goals prior to creating their syllabi and formalizing the details of their collaboration; they are also encouraged to seek VPTL assistance in reaching these goals, as well as formulating and reaching one more specific to their courses.

Learning goals for GSs in this apprenticeship include (but are not limited to):

- syllabus design, including how this relates to a broader program or major
- seminar leadership; lecturing; delivering multi-media presentations
- assignment design; classroom activity design and implementation
- grading and student feedback; mentoring student writing as well as individual and/or group projects among students
- how to use platforms such as Canvas to facilitate discussion and learning
- ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of readings, assignments, activities, etc.
- self-assessment and group assessment with teaching team
- how to research and implement new teaching practices, using the most recent pedagogical research, especially in response to student need or feedback
- how to prepare an effective teaching statement that reflects both breadth of teaching experience and strong knowledge of teaching and learning research
- how to prepare a teaching portfolio for work done at Stanford and beyond

Learning goals for Fs in this apprenticeship include (but are not limited to):

- improving undergraduate teaching at Stanford, by using feedback from co-teachers and group discussions to become more self-aware and effective as teachers
- improving graduate student teaching at Stanford, by responding effectively to the need for good researchers who are also inspiring and well-trained teachers
- staying on top of new pedagogical techniques and research via actual experimentation with them as well as theoretical discussion
- acquiring a thorough knowledge of how pedagogical innovation relates to program-building, interdisciplinary programs, and other structural issues in humanities teaching
- building a cross-disciplinary conversation about best teaching practices that will affect teaching at Stanford but will also result in new research in teaching and learning that strengthens Stanford’s position as a leader in teaching

**Impact**

This project has played a crucial role in training our graduate students as undergraduate teachers. It has also encouraged faculty to rethink their course structures and reflect on their teaching styles. As such, CTP has had significant impact on the quality of education that undergraduates at Stanford have received, graduate training, and faculty engagement with teaching.
Feedback from graduate students has been very positive. One of our alumnae published the linked article in *Inside Higher Ed*:

https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2016/04/05/advantages-co-teaching-graduate-students-essay?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=88bba1a6f5-DNU20160405&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fcbc04421-88bba1a6f5-198177994

The program encourages faculty to reconceptualize their existing courses and articulate their pedagogical approach, both within the teaching team and in the cross-disciplinary plenary sessions. It also provides impetus for faculty to develop new and creative courses that benefit specifically from a co-teaching model. Partnering with a graduate student further provides faculty with a new perspective on teaching and course materials, and offers invaluable insight into the challenges and processes of becoming a teacher/scholar in today’s research university.

- “This was an important opportunity to work with graduate students in the undergraduate-teaching setting...Having an interlocutor about teaching alone was a boon; but this was also a way for me to see how young scholars, the grad students, would approach teaching the material in their own ways.” (faculty evaluation)

- “I came away from the [plenary] with a much greater sensitivity to the diversity of pedagogical approaches that can be used in a classroom. We don’t get enough of this exposure to different approaches.” (faculty evaluation)

For graduate students, the program provides an opportunity to work closely with an experienced teacher and to develop and teach the type of course that is not generally available to graduate student TAs. Graduate students receive immediate feedback on their teaching over the course of a full quarter and gain experience in course design, high-level teaching strategies, and assessment. In the plenary sessions, graduate students reflect on education alongside faculty, and thus participate directly in the professional community of the university. In addition to concrete pedagogical training beyond language teaching, graduate students gain insight into the full spectrum of challenges involved in teaching the humanities at the college level. The plenary encourages graduate students to consider how a course fits into both a wider department curriculum and university mission, and acknowledge how teaching involves participation in a wider community, revising the more traditional model of an individual creating a syllabus within their own narrow field and in isolation. Their work as co-teachers and on-going discussions about pedagogy across disciplines in the Humanities add to their professional development as colleagues working within an institution. Additionally, close work with faculty over an entire quarter enables those faculty to write detailed and persuasive letters of recommendation that deal in a substantial way with teaching.

- “Co-teaching was a very valuable experience, and was the highlight of my academic year. I was fortunate in that the professor I was working with asked for my input along the way on all aspects of the course, from the syllabus to assignments. In class, she delegated too,
giving me the opportunity to take the reigns on topics that were in line with my own research.” (graduate evaluation)

- “It was useful to be in dialogue with the professor I was working with about planning the syllabus and writing the midterm and final exams, to see the thought and planning that goes into those aspects of the course behind the scene.” (graduate evaluation)
- “The meetings were great in the sense that I felt like I belonged to a group for whom education and pedagogy really mattered, and it’s a great feeling. It also made me reflect on and discover innovative teaching techniques.” (graduate evaluation)

Ongoing Program Development

Following the CTP’s pilot program from 2012-2014, the directorship has been actively implementing changes to transition CTP into a sustainable and institutionalized program in Stanford’s curriculum for humanities graduate students. Starting in 2018-19, CTP will be a DLCL Focal Group, which will ensure a limited amount of stable funding (see details below).

Selection Process

Starting in spring 2016, we introduced a formal application process in which an equitable and well-designed co-teaching model was one of the main criteria. The application required each teaching team to articulate a viable co-teaching model for their proposed course, and the joint application format initiated a direct collaboration between students and faculty. In some cases, the Director provided feedback and allowed teams to revise and improve this portion of their application. Co-teaching models were compiled and shared in the first plenary meeting. To promote accountability, teaching teams are asked to revisit their proposals throughout the year and consider ways to take full advantage of the collaborative model. At the end of the year, teams are asked to reflect on the co-teaching experience.

Evaluation Process

We are in the process of creating a formal evaluation structure for continued program improvement. This will include small group discussions with GSs only, led by VPTL, as well as small group discussions with undergraduates enrolled in a CTP course. They will also include a more targeted anonymous online survey, to be filled out by Fs, GSs, and undergraduates. This new process of evaluation and feedback will ensure that the program continues to meet the needs of faculty and graduate students and remains accountable to its stakeholders. In the past, informal anonymous surveys were conducted to get a sense of the program’s strengths and weaknesses, and a group discussion was also held last year to discuss the future of CTP, including format, planning, and desired outcomes.