

Teaching Experiment Report

Fall 2020

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ITSC 8665 - Graduate Teaching Seminar

During the Fall 2020 semester I took my second semester of the teaching seminar ITSC 8665. In this class, I worked with other PhD students to develop a preliminary draft of a handbook for teaching assistants (TAs) in the College of Computing and Informatics (CCI) at UNC Charlotte. This handbook included 12 chapters which covered a variety of topics, including the roles and responsibilities of a TA, how to grade assignments, and how to prepare course materials. However, the chapter I was responsible for writing focused on how to identify, interact with, and help students that are performing poorly in class.

Through the creation of this chapter, I learned from other PhD students' experiences as TAs indicators for identifying students who are performing poorly in class. Additionally, I learned a variety of methods to communicate with students in an approachable manner so that the student feels encouraged to seek help to improve their understanding of the class material. Lastly, I learned tips for how to help students improve their performance while interacting with them in class, such as when answering questions, and outside of the classroom, such as during office hours or when grading. Additionally I learned about resources provided to students by UNC Charlotte and by CCI to help students who are struggling academically improve and understand the material.

The creation of this handbook also helped me reflect on my own experiences as a TA to identify the skills I have learned to communicate effectively and help students learn. While reflecting and reading each of the chapters, I also identified areas that I lack experience in or need to improve in, such as designing course material, to become more effective as a TA.

CTL Workshops

This semester I took two of the online workshops provided by the CTL (Center for Teaching and Learning) at UNC Charlotte. The first workshop was Online Teaching Foundations. In this workshop, I learned tips for designing and teaching an online course. Some of these tips included how to promote student interaction in the course through the use of discussion forums and diverse teaching materials. The second workshop was Online Video Foundations. In this workshop, I learned how to create videos using Kaltura, edit and caption these videos, and add in video quizzes to assess students' understanding of the material. Both of these workshops were useful in helping me learn skills and resources for designing course material for an online course.

ITIS 3130

This semester I assisted with ITIS 3130— Human Centered Design which was taught at the undergraduate level. This course was taught online, and was my first experience as a TA for an online course. During this course, I realized how different teaching online is from face-to-face instruction, which prompted me to take the previously described CTL workshops to improve my own understanding of how to teach effectively online.

The first lesson I learned during this semester was the importance of short, but interactive, lectures when teaching an online course. ITIS 3130 was a large class and we noticed it seemed easy for students to get distracted and not pay attention to the lectures, particularly when they were long. Therefore, I observed how techniques such as incorporating discussions and examples which required student input while keeping the lectures short helped more students focus on the material without getting distracted. I also had the opportunity to practice these methods when giving a guest lecture in class towards the end of the semester. Giving this lecture also showed me that it helps to present slides with more explanation on them in online courses to help students follow along in class and provide them with another resource to refer back to later in case they missed anything in class.

The second lesson I learned was the importance of providing thorough feedback when grading assignments, especially assignments that are building blocks to other assignments or

topics. In ITIS 3130, students primarily seemed to ask clarification questions when working on an assignment in class. Consequently, one of the primary ways we had to identify and correct misunderstandings regarding course material, especially for students who did not ask questions in class, was to provide thorough feedback on assignments that explained why an answer was wrong or did not meet the assignment expectations. This not only helped the students have a detailed explanation to refer back to when confused, but also helped us identify topics that we should spend more time on in class.

Spring 2021

During the Spring semester, I will be teaching ITIS 6420/8420- Usable Security and Privacy as well as taking my third semester of ITSC 8665. Usable Security and Privacy will be taught online, so I also plan to take two more CTL workshops focused on skills for online courses to learn more about designing engaging and effective online courses.