



## GRAD 810: Communicating in the American University Classroom

Preparing International Teaching Assistants Program (PITAP)  
The Graduate School  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

*Syllabus*  
Spring 2015

### Course Description

This course is offered through the Graduate School at UNC Chapel Hill as part of the Preparing International Teaching Assistants Program (PITAP, <http://gradschool.unc.edu/pitap.index.html>). GRAD 810 serves as an introduction to teaching in the American classroom. The course focuses on cross-cultural communication, English pronunciation, basic teaching skills, and topics necessary for effective interaction in the American classroom. There is no additional tuition charge to the student for enrolling in GRAD 810 who is already registered as a full-time student (9 credit hours). For students not enrolled in 9 credit hours, enrollment in one of the courses may increase the total number of credits resulting in a new tuition rate level. Students should discuss necessary tuition payments with their funding source and academic program.

### Instructor

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The Graduate School  
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Office hours: M, W 11am-1pm

### Teaching Assistant

Sharon LaBurt Shofer, M.A.Ed.  
Email: [shofer@live.unc.edu](mailto:shofer@live.unc.edu)  
Office: Room 204, Graduate Student Center, 211A West Cameron Ave.  
Phone: (919) 271-0740  
Office hours: M, W 11am-1pm (Available at other times by appointment)

### Class meeting times

Section 001: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 - 11:50am, FedEx Global 3024  
Section 002: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 – 4:20pm, Greenlaw 526A

### Recommended Texts

- Curzan, Anne and Lisa Damour. First Day to Final Grade. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011. ISBN: 0472034510.
- Gilbert, Judy. Clear speech: pronunciation and listening comprehension in American English : student's book. New York: Cambridge University Press, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 2012. ISBN 1107682959
- Grant, Linda. Well said: Pronunciation for Clear Communication, Boston : Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2012. ISBN: 1424006252.
- Ross, Catherine and Dunphy, Jane. Strategies for Teaching Assistant and International Teaching Assistant Development: Beyond Microteaching. Jossey-Bass/Wiley, San Francisco, CA, 2007. ISBN: 978-0470180822.
- Sarkisian, E. Teaching American Students. Harvard University Press, 2006. ISBN: 0-674-02141-X.
- Smith, J., Meyers, C.M., Burkhalter, A.J. Communicate: Strategies for International Teaching Assistants. Regents/Prentice Hall, 2007. ISBN: 1577665309.



## Core Areas of Focus

- Language Improvement
- Cultural Differences
- Teaching Strategies

## Course Goals

- Practice English pronunciation and grammar
- Learn about cross-cultural differences in educational settings
- Develop cross-cultural communication skills and intercultural competence
- Practice teaching techniques and interacting with American students
- Empower and build confidence in the classroom as an effective TA

## Teaching Methods used in the course

The course is facilitated through active learning techniques. These techniques include microteaching practice sessions, discussions, case study analysis, self and peer evaluation, interactions with current TAs, linguistic guidance, role-playing, journal reflections, and conversation logs.

## Microteaching demonstrations

Students will be expected to give microteaching demonstrations as part of the class. These experiences may be recorded and analyzed together as a class and/or individually with the instructor. The purpose of this activity is to increase your confidence in front of a classroom, identify areas of improvement, and document your progress in the course.

## Conversation Log

Students will also create and keep a conversation log throughout the course. Students will record date, topics discussed, name of person, and duration of time spent conversing. Topics discussed can be anything the student chooses, including but not limited to...interests, hobbies, learning about American culture, sharing your own culture, your research areas, your family, current events, etc. Student's log should contain documentation for a minimum of **8 hours** of conversation. We will be discussing the progress of your conversations logs throughout the semester so be prepared to share some of your observations and areas of need. You will probably notice that others have similar communication issues and challenges.

### Communication Progress

As part of evaluating progress in your English conversational skills, students will meet with Sharon, PITAP Teaching Assistant, individually at the beginning, midway through, and at the end of the semester. These meetings will be 30 minutes in length, during which students will work with Sharon on specific language issues related to speaking and listening. These meetings will count for 1.5 hours of your conversation log.

#### Schedule

First meeting: complete by February 5th.

Second meeting: complete by March 5th.

Third meeting: complete by April 9th.

**Thus, of your 8 hours, at least 1.5 will be used for your individual meetings with Sharon, up to 1.5 hours with other native English speakers (friends, advisors, faculty) and at least 3 hours or more with one or more of the undergraduate students that we provide as conversation partners. These students are listed on our course Sakai site under "Syllabus." Please take advantage of these opportunities as these students are eager to meet with you! You may meet with conversation partners in small groups if you would like, but please limit any small groups to 4 people. (No more than two undergraduate volunteers and two graduate students). Another opportunity for completing your conversation log will be through the English Conversation Group coordinated by the Writing Center. We recommend that conversations be between 30 minutes and 1 hour.**



**Requirements for the Conversation Log:**

- At least:** 1.5 hours with Sharon  
3 hours with undergraduates  
8 hours total
- Up to:** 1.5 hours with any native English speaker (friend, classmate, professor, etc.)  
3.5 hours with Conversation Group

**Possible Ways to Complete the Conversation Log**

Speaking Partner	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D
Sharon	1.5	1.5	1.5	2
Other Native Speaker	1.5	0	0	0.5
Undergraduates	3	6.5	3	4
Speaking Group	2	0	3.5	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 hours total</b>	<b>8 hours total</b>	<b>8 hours total</b>	<b>8 hours total</b>

**Course Policies**

This is a pass/fail, 2 credit course. Students are expected to attend all sessions. Each student is permitted two (2) unexcused absences; any other absence must be excused by the instructor prior to the class missed. **More than 2 unexcused absences will be grounds for failing the course.**

**Assumptions about Culture and Language**

In this course a number of generalizations (e.g. characteristics of U.S. higher education, qualities of UNC undergraduates etc.) will be discussed. While these generalizations can be very useful in learning about another culture, they must not be mistaken for stereotypes. A generalization is a hypothesis - a starting point of inquiry about a subject. Exceptions and individual variation are always present.

Further, the exploration of cross-cultural differences in teaching and learning can be a complicated and sensitive task. It is not unusual for misunderstandings to occur. In order to do the work of this course, it is important to acknowledge this potential and to prepare for how to handle any misunderstandings or feelings of offense that may arise. It is a course expectation that any concerns that arise will be brought to the attention of the instructor and that a mutually agreeable solution will be the goal. (Adapted from R. Michael Paige’s concept of cross-cultural inoculation)

Finally, it is important to have realistic goals for language development. The goal is not for students to sound like native speakers of U.S. English, but rather to be intelligible to undergraduates enrolled in their classes. In this course, students will need to demonstrate sufficient proficiency to convey discipline-specific content effectively, and comprehend questions and comments. Minor language errors that do not interfere with meaning are expected.

**CAMPUS RESOURCES**

**PITAP website:** <http://gradschool.unc.edu/student/pitap/resources.html>

**International Student & Scholar Services**

Global Education Building  
<http://oiss.unc.edu/>

Lists additional resources to support the needs of international students and scholars at UNC.

**International Student Support Group & Drop-In Hours**

*Support Group:* Student Union, Room 3515

Wednesdays, 11:30am – 12:30pm, begins January 28.

*Drop-In Hours:* FedEx Global Education Building, Office of International Student & Scholar Services (OISSS)

Thursdays, 1:00pm – 2:30pm, begins January 29

Both are facilitated by Preeti Vidwans, PsyD



**UNC Graduate and Professional Student Federation (GPSF)**

**Office Location**

Suite 2501-F  
Carolina Student Union

**Phone Numbers:**

(919)962-5595 (office)  
(919)962-4723 (fax)

**Email Address:** [gpsf@unc.edu](mailto:gpsf@unc.edu)



Date	In-class Topic and Activity	Post-Assignment
Th 1/08/15	<b>Introductions</b> Course plan, logistics, course expectations, Language Survey Structure of Conversation Log	-Self assessment of language skills
T 1/13/15	Your First Day of Class as an Instructor Establishing rapport with students Discipline specific pronunciation practice	-Generate list of 20 words from your discipline to practice
Th 1/15/15	Pronunciation practice Compensation strategies – a case study	
T 1/20/15	Pedagogical Content Knowledge Writing Learning Objectives using Bloom’s Taxonomy Higher-Order Thinking Skills	<b>Observe an undergraduate classroom. Complete rubric</b>
Th 1/22/15	Hooks and Scaffolding Active Learning Techniques: Getting Students Involved	
T 1/27/15	Organizational Clues Calibration of microteaching rubric	Prepare for microteaching
Th 1/29/15	<b>Microteaching: Defining a Term</b>	
T 2/03/15	<b>Microteaching: Defining a Term</b>	
Th 2/05/15	<b>Microteaching: Defining a Term</b>	
T 2/10/15	What’s Your & Your Students’ Learning Style?	
Th 2/12/15	<b>Discussion of classroom observations – student analysis</b> Knowing Your Students – Student characteristics in today’s American University. Comparing cross-cultural differences, student/teacher interactions, etc. Prepare for microteaching	
T 2/17/15	<b>Discussion of classroom observations – instructor analysis</b> Characteristics of a good teacher - a cross-cultural analysis Orientation cues	
Th 2/19/15	Classroom expressions and terms Non-verbal communication	Prepare for microteaching
T 2/24/15	<b>Microteaching: Using Visuals to Explain Concepts</b>	
Th 2/26/15	<b>Microteaching: Using Visuals to Explain Concepts</b>	
T 3/03/15	<b>Microteaching: Using Visuals to Explain Concepts</b>	
Th 3/05/15	Levels of Directness, Manner of Speaking Practice pronunciation – numbers and Greek letters	
T 3/10/15	<b>SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS</b>	
Th 3/12/15	<b>SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS</b>	
T 3/17/15	Listening & Responding to students’ questions	
Th 3/19/15	Listening & Responding to students’ questions	<b>Interview an experienced TA in your department</b>
T 3/24/15	Grading and Providing Feedback to Students	Prepare for microteaching
Th 3/26/15	<b>Microteaching: Teaching a Process</b>	
T 3/31/15	<b>Microteaching: Teaching a Process</b>	
Th 4/02/15	<b>Microteaching: Teaching a Process</b>	
T 4/07/15	<b>Discussion of experienced TA interviews</b>	
Th 4/09/15	Case scenarios: Dealing with challenging student issues	
T 4/14/15	Undergraduate Culture and Idioms Students Use	Prepare for microteaching
Th 4/16/15	<b>Microteaching: Final Microteaching</b>	
T 4/21/15	<b>Microteaching: Final Microteaching</b>	
Th 4/23/15	<b>Microteaching: Final Microteaching</b>	Conversation logs due