

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

at George Mason University



A Teacher's Manual



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TEACHER'S MANUAL -- THE CONCEPT

For some time the program committee has been encouraging OLLI members to consider teaching a subject that interests them. While we know that our members come from varied backgrounds and have had special interests in particular subject areas, potential teachers may have had no experience whatsoever in the teaching field. We contend that this should not be a problem in the OLLI world.

In the interests of heading off any concerns, we have written this teaching manual. It doesn't purport to offer all answers to the questions a new teacher might ask, but is the accumulation of many ideas seasoned OLLI teachers have provided.

The 2018 revision

Note: The 2018 revision has included much more material which is OLLI-specific and includes information vital to teaching at OLLI. We very strongly encourage both new and seasoned instructors to peruse it. Even if you have taught at OLLI before, as we transition to new procedures and digital approaches you may well learn something new!

INTRODUCTION

Among OLLI's large membership there are many who thrill to some specific interest and are generous enough to want to share, but who may never have taught before. No school or university teacher certifications are required to teach at OLLI. Our teachers only need a deep desire to bring someone else to the appreciation of what it is that they find exciting in a field. Whether that field is literature, music, art, economics, history, drama, science, technology, or something never offered before, that passion could well be contagious.

We'd like to provide you with advice that will spur you to approach the program planning committees with your own course ideas.

STARTING POINT

We very much appreciate your interest in sharing your knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm with our members! Please do consult with the appropriate program planning group or the staff program associates to be sure that the topic of your choice fits into the other planned offerings in terms of time and uniqueness.

It is **essential** that all prospective instructors fill out a **Course Proposal Form** and otherwise familiarize themselves with the assistance that OLLI can offer, audio-visual and digital, all of which is fully described in this manual. This allows us to fulfill your request and to keep us on track as to your needs. Much of the discussion following, e.g., Decision Making, Class Materials, etc., will feed into the Course Proposal Form. Please also refer to the OLLI website home page, www.oli.gmu.edu, and specifically the Instructor Resources pages.

DECISION MAKING

No teacher should go into the classroom with only a vague idea of what he or she wants to teach. Be careful that you do not make your topic so broad that it lacks focus. Don't take on more than you can comfortably fit into the number of sessions available in the term.

Anticipate how to help your students learn the topic. This may depend upon the subject, but decide how you will run your class by considering the following:

- **Format:** Lecture or discussion class or a combination of both? How many sessions will you require to cover your material?
- **Lecture Aids:** If your basic presentation will be in the form of a lecture, will you use a script, talking point notes, or your AV material as projected on a screen? OLLI staff needs to know about any AV requirements you will require, as they are the only persons permitted to set up and adjust the equipment.
- **Number of Students:** Envision the ideal number of students to participate in your class. This may not be necessary for all courses, but those that lend themselves to discussion may need to be limited to a smaller number of students. Class registration will be closed if the total reaches the maximum that the teacher feels is appropriate for the class. You may also want to specify a minimum.
- **Lecture Setup:** If you will be using a lecture format, the classroom will be set up in the usual way; if discussion, you may want tables and chairs set in a special configuration. You will need to alert the staff so they can make the room ready in advance.
- **Use of AV:** OLLI supports DVDs, CDs, DocuCam, audio, PowerPoint presentations, videos from YouTube and other Internet sources. Assistance in using the AV equipment is available at the Tallwood office.
- **Handouts:** These may be outlines, maps, timelines, syllabi, tables, bibliographies, etc. (See the Distributing Materials Electronically section of this manual for more ways to distribute handouts.)
- **Relevant Guest Presenters:** Experts in the topic whom you think will enhance your class coverage may be invited to one or more sessions. Note that OLLI also encourages team teaching, if relevant for your topic.
- **Research:** Is enough information available? Is it at the right level for your audience, some of whom might be experts in the field? OLLI instructors are eligible to use the GMU libraries and, when assigned a GMU email account, may check out materials from the libraries. OLLI staff can help you obtain a GMU email account. We can also make instruction in research skills available upon request.
- **Questions:** Plan for them within the time allowed and decide whether you want them as you go or save all to the end.

COURSE PROPOSAL FORM

The decisions that you made on course format will now assist you in filling out our mandatory **Course Proposal Form**, which is to be used for multi-session classes and single time presentations. The form is online on the OLLI website, at www.oli.gmu.edu/oli-course-proposal-form. It includes contact information (your name, address, phone number and email address), the

title of the course and your scheduling preferences as to day of the week or a specific date, time slot, preferred campus location, the minimum and maximum number of attendees, and the course description/bio. Please be as flexible as possible to help facilitate the scheduling process.

Course Description: the Course Proposal Form includes a section for a course description which will be included in that term's catalog. This should be short and to the point; it need not include the topics for each class meeting, but just a general overview. If you are still unsure of the general contents, you may add some description now and revise it later when the catalog copy is being prepared. Remember that an engaging course title and description will be the best way to attract members' interest. There are guidelines available on the OLLI website. The course description must not exceed 150 words. Note that if it is longer, the catalog editor may well cut it back.

Biography: please provide OLLI with a one or two sentence biographical paragraph, all of which should relate to the course topic. It will be included in the catalog along with the course description. A sample bio: "Ms. Joan Doe has previously taught theater arts in the Fairfax County Public Schools and at OLLI."

CATALOG COPY

After submission of the Course Proposal Form, you will be contacted by one of our Program Associates to confirm receipt of the form. They also will contact you once the relevant term schedule is in draft form, to verify that the date/day/times match your preference. This will be an opportunity for you to review and edit the draft of the catalog course description and bio.

Subsequently our catalog editors will review your course description for consistency, style, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and length. Descriptions where more than minimal changes have been made by editors will be returned to you for final approval. Note that our quarterly catalog is compiled at least three months in advance of the start of the term, enabling editing, proofreading, formatting, printing and mailing or posting online several weeks prior to the start of term registration.

Shortly before the term begins, you will also receive a copy of the final catalog in printed format, which includes maps to the various OLLI campuses.

CLASS MATERIALS

Office Staff:

- The staff is here to help you with your materials and is always very supportive. But to meet your needs, they request advance warning of any major time requirement. About two to three weeks before each term, instructors will receive an electronic copy of the AV/class setup letter form to confirm the audio visual and classroom setup needs.

Presentation Materials:

- OLLI classrooms can be equipped, upon request, with easels and white boards to support real time input.
- OLLI supports the following electronic resources: PowerPoint, MS Word, real time Internet access. However, it is not always a certainty that your software is the same version

as that loaded on OLLI's classroom laptops. A wise precaution is to create a universal file, e.g., a PowerPoint Slideshow file, a PDF.

- If you are unfamiliar with creating a PowerPoint presentation, instruction can be made available to you. Contact the OLLI office for such help. Also consult the last section in this manual for some tips on successful PowerPoint showings.
- We have observed that resolution, colors and positioning of text on the OLLI hardware are not always the same as the visuals on your home computer. This is especially important if you are using your own laptop in the classroom. A practice session at OLLI's site is strongly recommended. Contact the OLLI office to make arrangements, preferably well before the term begins.
- If you require AV connection help or a special configuration of the furniture, let the office know well beforehand. If you will be using your own equipment, be sure it is compatible with the OLLI equipment. For example, if you use a Mac laptop, you will need a special cable to project your PowerPoint presentation.
- A prudent move is to email a copy of your presentation file to yourself, and also place a copy on a flash drive and/or a CD. This way you have a backup copy if you misplace the flash drive or CD, or if there is damage to the portable media.
- Do not use copyrighted materials without reading the Copyright Rules document accessible on the Instructor Resources page of the OLLI website.

Duplicating:

- Get help from the staff for duplicating materials well in advance of the date needed. Turnaround of one week in advance is requested.

Distributing Materials Electronically:

- There are several ways to disseminate materials to the class electronically, preferably in PDF format. The OLLI **DocStore** (short for Document Storage) is a long term storage location accessible from the OLLI website, where anyone (even non-OLLI members) may view the files that you add there. However, bear in mind that no copyrighted materials should be included in DocStore files.
- A more direct method for providing materials to the class and otherwise communicating with class attendees is the **OLLI Member Portal**. Only OLLI members and instructors can access the Portal. As an instructor, you will be able to log onto the Member Portal, View or Print the Class Roster and Send Emails to the entire class (with a very few exceptions, all OLLI members have email addresses on file.) This is a secure and focused way to reach your class members.
- Contact the OLLI office for details on how to add files to the DocStore or to use the Portal.

Rehearsal:

- **Timing:** Once you have all your materials in hand, you will want to estimate how much time the presentation will take.
- **Questions:** If you decide to take questions at the end, you have more control over the timing because you can plan on finishing ten minutes before the end of the session.
- **Rehearse Ahead:** Rehearse your presentation, making sure that your notes are in order, that you are in sync with the AV equipment. At this point, you may wish to make changes, additions or cuts to improve the presentation.

ARRIVAL AT THE SITE

- **Come Early:** Plan to arrive at your classroom with plenty of time to set up before your class is to begin, twenty minutes early at a minimum. When you enter the classroom, be sure that it is set up to your specifications and that the AV equipment is as you wish. With the help of a staff person, you may want to do a dry run to be sure all is ready for you before the staffer leaves the room.
- **Use the Mike:** The podium should have a mike earpiece available. The site assistant will fit it for you. While you may feel that your voice carries without using the mike, some of our members with hearing loss find this additional amplification helpful.
- **Meet the Liaison:** Some classes are assigned a coordinator who would be involved in pre-class guidance and may or may not serve as liaison as well. If a liaison is available, he or she will accomplish certain duties, including making any announcements, introducing you on the first class day, helping with lights if necessary, or handing out printed materials that you have brought to the class to support your topic. The liaison will speak and then turn the class over to you. Most, but not all, classes have liaisons; if you haven't heard from a liaison in advance of the class, you might contact the office to see if there may be one available. Often OLLI members serve as their own liaisons when teaching.
- **Guest Speakers:** If you have arranged to include a speaker in your course, confirm the date, timing, and driving directions so that there are no misunderstandings. Be sure when you engage this speaker that they have some idea of what to expect from the OLLI group.

CLASS PRESENTATION

- **Handouts:** If you have prepared an outline of the lecture, reference it at the start and make sure everyone has a copy. They can then follow along and know where you are within the framework of the class topic. Some instructors prefer to distribute handouts at the end of class.
- **Beginning:** Some instructors like starting with an amusing anecdote, a joke, or whatever will relax the group before settling down. If you haven't been introduced, please tell the class who you are and a bit of your background and/or why you wanted to teach this topic, e.g., "the topic of proper exercise is helpful to all of us. As a physical therapist, I see the benefits in my office every day."
- **Move:** It helps to keep audience attention by movement on your part; within your script there may be times when you can step away from the lectern and cross to another side of the room for off-hand remarks. You can step into the group area to make a point or to answer a question from someone in a back row.
- **Vary Your Voice,** especially if you will be referring to a script. As you read, emphasize the important points; slow down, change the pace, or laugh at your own words if that is appropriate. Even if you are using a mike, be aware that you should keep your volume constant. Speakers sometimes tend to drop their voices at the end of sentences and their listeners miss the total thought conveyed.
- **Handling Questions:** If you have opted to take questions during your talk, tell your group of that fact at the outset. Always repeat the question for the others to hear before you answer it. Questions in the middle of a lecture can often sidetrack the discussion and steal from your topic time. Those questioners who may inadvertently run away with your class

time don't realize that other students want you to continue with your train of thought. Do not rush through your presentation and be sure to leave time at the end of the presentation for questions. Fifteen minutes is usually sufficient, unless you already are handling questions during the class.

If there are still questions hanging without clear answers, offer to research during the ensuing week and be sure that you return with answers to discuss first thing.

- **Eye Contact:** As you speak, make eye contact with one or another in the class, moving your attention from people in the front to those in the back or on either side.
- **Be Spontaneous: Never** plan to read to the class from your notes or PowerPoint text! Reading a pre-prepared speech is not conducive to engagement with your audience! Ditto for reading the PowerPoint text verbatim – the class members CAN read the screen without your help. Paraphrase or add comments or otherwise expand on the ideas.
- **Lighting:** Consider turning off overhead lights. Presentations will show up better in subdued light.
- **Stretch Break:** You may consider offering a one or two minute stretch break half way thru the session. But be aware that you must be firm about getting back to the presentation after that one or two minute time frame.
- **Finishing Early or Running out of Time:** Once you have determined that you can fit your material into the 85 minute timeframe, decide what you will do if you finish early. You may keep a few discussion questions on hand to fill this gap. Be prepared for the possibility that time will run out before you finish. Consider whether you could cut as you speak or if your too-long presentation can be picked up the following week.
- **Conclusions:** Keep your eye on the clock so that you have a few moments to tie up your points at the end and offer some enticing clues about what to can expect in the next session.

ADDITIONAL USEFUL INFORMATION

- **Rosters:** Class rosters are available for instructors through the Member Portal (see discussion above on the portal.) An instructor password is required for access. Once logged in, the options include Past Classes, Current Classes, or Future Classes. Until the term has begun or your class begins, select Future Classes. Once chosen, the next options are View Roster, Print Roster, Send E-Mail, or Sign In Sheet. Hard copy rosters will also be available near the door of the classroom at the start of class; attendees are expected and encouraged to sign in for each session.
- **Feedback Forms:** OLLI can provide you with an optional feedback form to distribute at the end of the class. The attendees fill it out as they exit class, but they should be instructed to leave the forms at the door. The staff never sees the forms; the only person who reviews them is you, the instructor. The standard feedback form is available on the OLLI website under the section For Instructors, although you may also use a form of your own creation, if you prefer.
- **Parking:** Free parking is readily available, but a parking pass is needed for the Loudoun site, obtainable from the Mason at Loudoun office, suite 130. A space may be reserved for instructors at all Fairfax sites if needed; request it from the OLLI Tallwood office staff. Instructor spaces cannot be reserved at the Reston or Loudoun sites. Handicapped parking is available at all sites.

- **Free Course Attendance:** Instructors who are not OLLI members and were not members for the previous term may attend a maximum of two courses during each term that they teach, on a space available basis, with members who register having priority. Contact the OLLI Registrar for enrollment.
- **Teacher Appreciation Event:** OLLI hosts a teacher appreciation event each spring and all instructors for the year are cordially invited.
- **Teacher Support:** an initiative providing ongoing support to instructors is being launched. Envisioned is a periodically distributed e-newsletter, the “ePistle”, and semi-annual instructor welcome meetings.
- **Additional Information:** Lots more information for instructors is on the OLLI website – see the reference at the end of the manual.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION TIPS

- PowerPoint is a visual tool; it is **not** your presentation. Don’t put all that you have to say in PowerPoint, only your key points.
- Select a PowerPoint theme – not just black text on a white background, but color and borders or graphics. See PowerPoint’s Design tab for some options.
- Use color judiciously, e.g., a dark background with gray text is very hard on the eyes. Light backgrounds are preferred. Usually the overhead lights are dimmed for PowerPoint presentation projection.
- Avoid using much red or green; some members of the audience could be color blind!
- OLLI does not use a color printer or copier for making handouts, so if you intend to request hardcopy handouts from your PowerPoint pages, do not use yellow on white backgrounds and avoid using blue (which often does not photocopy well.) Black text on white background is what the copier will produce. Use PowerPoint’s Print Preview option to view the black on white potential output. Ask OLLI staff for suggestions, if unsure.
- Use an Outline (a feature built into PowerPoint to keep your text organized – this is to benefit you – find under View Outline) while building the presentation.
- Have a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Develop a Title Page for your starting point. Include title of talk, your name, and your contact information.
- Present a brief overview of what you plan to cover, either for the current day or over the entire course.
- Use bullets, not sentences, if at all possible, and skip “the,” “a,” and “He, She, It” for brevity. No need to end bullets with a period.
- Keep text on each page to not more than six bullets. If there are tables or graphs, reduce the number of bullets and make each one relevant to and descriptive of the table or graph.
- For each key thought, add a page.
- Page titles should be in 28 - 32 point font at least, text in at least 20, but 24 point is better. Page titles are optional.
- Try to avoid using the bottom line of the page; some members in the back row might have to stand up to see that line.
- Use slide numbers on the page – it is helpful for YOU. But keep them small.

- Animation (see the Animation tab) helps keep it lively. Try highlighting one bullet at a time.
- Use photos, icons, videos. (See PowerPoint's Insert tab.) Any pictures or other graphics will liven up the presentation and maintain the interest of the audience.
- Illustrate your points with the Internet wherever relevant – it is a great resource! All of OLLI's classrooms have live Internet connectivity. Sometimes Internet service gets interrupted during presentations, so staff strongly recommends you download Internet videos to your device as a backup before your presentation. Use the PickVideo.net program to download and embed any YouTube clips.
- Don't be afraid to summarize at the end.
- Last page should include your email address, in the event of further questions. This is also a good way to indicate that the presentation is over. Alternatively: "Any Questions?"

References:

- *The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills* by Saphier, Haley-Spera, Gower: RBT.2008
- Instructor Resources, <https://olli.gmu.edu/for-our-instructors/>
- OLLI Discussion Guide on the OLLI website