

ePistle

Working for Excellence the Teacher Resource Initiative(WE-TRI)

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Teacher's Manual

Doris Bloch



At the recent Reston Teacher's Event, Doris Bloch gave a brief presentation on her work revising the OLLI Teacher's Manual.

This recent revision discusses such important topics as what format to use for your class, completing the course proposal form, coordinating with OLLI staff, providing materials to students, how to prepare your classroom for your presentation, and many other useful tips.

To check it out, from the OLLI homepage, use the main menu dropdown, and near the bottom of the second column from the left is a link for Instructor Resources which has the manual and other great info. Check it out!

Editor's Comments



Greeting to all OLLI instructors and would be instructors. As previously noted, the ePistle is not on a six time a year schedule, so this is the first since January and the last until May

Most instructors have a great deal of interaction with OLLI staff, and there is a good deal of transition to report. OLLI is losing some key staff members, but I am certain their replacements will bring the same level of support

Since January we have had a successful teacher event in Reston. More about that event, and a save the date for Tallwood, later in this edition, along with a possible change to those events structure

Also discussed in this issue is the idea of course descriptions. A wise person said that it is easier to write 1,000 words than 100 words, but when it comes to the course catalogue less is more. A quick discussion on why that is and some thoughts on how to accomplish it.

As usual we will include the calendar of upcoming events, to include some dates for course submissions. OLLI staff is now deeply involved in scheduling for the summer term. Moreover, due to instructors (thankfully!) submitting proposals early for the fall 2019 semester, that semester is virtually full. So set your eyes on the far horizon of Winter/Spring 2020.

As always, look forward to your thoughts, suggestions and comments. Excelsior!

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A fond farewell from Alice and Jen's Corner. (Now to be Alice and Shannon's Corner)

Jennifer McMahon writes: As many of you know, my last day at OLLI was Friday, March 15. It is hard to believe that it has been almost two years since I entered the world of OLLI. I thank you all for your support, your patience (so much patience), your laughter, and your kindness. It has been a true pleasure to serve you. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome my successor, our former registrar, Shannon Morrow. Many of you know Shannon's smiling face from your interactions with her at registration, but you may not know that Shannon has a Masters in International Education and taught at the Seoul International School, the Anglo American School in Moscow, the American School of Warsaw in Poland, and Chiang Mai International School in Thailand where she also served on their board of directors as liaison to the U.S Consulate. Additionally, while in Chiang Mai, Shannon served as Mrs. Consul General. Needless to say, I leave you in very capable hands!

As my final act, I make one final plea for completing the course proposal form; it will truly help Shannon keep the three campuses and almost 200 classes per term a bit more organized!

I thank you again from the bottom of my heart. It has been a wonderful ride!

Editor's Note – You may have noted in a recent E-news the item that Bill Walsh, longtime OLLI site assistant at Tallwood, will retire from OLLI at the end of spring term 2019. Bill has been a dedicated staff member for over a decade. Mike Emery will be replacing Bill Walsh. Many will remember Mike from his previous employment as OLLI's site assistant at Lord of Life Church.

Reston Teacher Event

On March 19th, the WE-TRI sponsored the second Teacher Appreciation event at the Reston Community Center. More than a dozen instructors and would be instructors gathered to munch on pizza and hear appreciation of their hard work from OLLI leadership.

In addition to some items discussed elsewhere – the Teacher Manual and course description – a

number of other topics came up in the lively discussion. The first dealt with communications. For the foreseeable future, docstore will be down. So if you provide materials such as slides to students, the best way is to use the email roster feature in the instructor profile. However, this has a limit on what you can forward, so particularly if you are including actual videos in your slides, dropbox may be a better option. Next was the issue of copyright. As previously noted, as a Mason affiliate, OLLI comes under the fair use exception – if you are going to use materials solely for classroom use, you should be OK. More information on copyright can be found on the Instructor Resources page. Another issue was the use of Mason professors or other non-OLLI instructors. The question was raised about asking them to teach an OLLI class. The Executive Director asked members to coordinate with staff to make sure that there was not someone else involved in working with that particular instructor. Finally, it was asked that if you are planning to teach a class, you electronically submit a course proposal form. By doing so, the form is automatically sent to a file. In the past, some instructors have instead sent staff an email message, which unfortunately may get lost in the piles of email received. More about the next event below!

Fall Fairfax Event

We have tentatively scheduled the Fall Fairfax event for Thursday, September 12. We anticipate that for this event, the format will remain essentially the same.

As noted elsewhere in this ePistle, no instructor should be reluctant to filch another instructor's good idea. So I now want to footnote Marianne Metz and Beth Lambert.

They came up with a great idea and implemented it at Reston – having an event before the spring term where students would be provided with presentation by instructors having classes in that term. This would allow the students to receive more information about the classes and the instructors to sell their courses. We are considering for the period between the summer and fall terms of 2020 bringing such an event to Tallwood – please let us know if this would be something you would be interested to provide as an instructor (and to listen to as a potential student!)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE OLLI

TIME APRIL 12

Fall 2019 Course Proposals Due

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE OLLI CAMPUSES

TIME JUNE 24

Summer 2019 Term Begins

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE OLLI

TIME JULY 29

Winter 2020 Course Proposals Due

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE TALLWOOD

TIME SEPTEMBER 12 (TENTATIVE)

FALL TEACHER EVENT

HEY, WHADDABOUT?

In a previous ePistle, we noted that there are a lot of ideas floating around that people may have for classes that they may not have the expertise or ability to teach. So as a new feature, we will include some ideas for future classes. If one of them piques your interest, please let me know at dunphyjj@aol.com and I can provide more details

Barbara Wilan notes that each year, Loudoun tries to center a series of classes on a specific country or regions. Having just completed Russia, the next area of interest is Greece. So if you have any ideas about Greek classes – whether it be history, art, music, politics or the like, step on up

Barbara also indicates that Loudoun is looking to do a similarly multifaceted look at the Gilded Age in US History – usually considered from the end of the Civil War in 1865 to the beginning to the TR Presidency in 1901. She already has on a tap a literature class, and I am planning to do a class on the debate over imperialism, but there are an infinite number of classes possible.

Some other ideas:

Buddy movie pictures

Genealogy

Local Historical Sites

Catalogue Writing

How do you get people to sign up for your class – simple – make them want to based on your course description!

You may have noticed some changes to the catalogue – particularly in its organization. Staff has worked hard to eliminate white space. This has the effect of cutting down on the pages – an important consideration given that printing and mailing the catalogues is a significant expense for OLLI

Now it is up to us instructors to do our part and to create exciting course descriptions using the minimum words possible.

First, let's start with the title for your class. With the offerings averaging well over 100 per term, the title is crucial for getting students to stop and read your description – think of it as your headline. Catchy titles will gain the readers' attention – compare Poets of the 19th Century (boring!) with 101 Uses for a Dead Poet (say what?)

Next, on the course description. Length should be no more than 150-200 words. A good way to sell the course is to let the reader know what they will get out of the course instead of just a rote recitation of the course contents.

We used to have a saying in the Army – BLUF (bottom line up front) Grab the readers' attention in the first sentence – even better, in the first words.

Finally, we come to the teacher biography. The limit should be 50-60 words, or 2-3 sentences. So there is not room for your curriculum vitae – and for many of our instructors, this would take up the entire catalogue!

Think about 1-2 sentences of general information – if you were asked to introduce yourself at a party, possibly including prior OLLI classes. Then include a sentence of how your bio supports the class – what in your education and experience makes you the best person to teach this class.

We look forward to your thoughts on how to write a perfect (and brief!) catalogue entry.

Tip of the Day

We will start a new feature with this edition – breaking down teaching into small bites of digestible information. Thanks to Doris and the Teacher Handbook for some great thoughts.

We'll start with the idea of eye contact. It is important for students to feel connected to both the class and the instructor, and thinking about eye contact is a great way to do so.

I know in the column next door I say that there are no approved required methods of teaching – well, maybe a few you should seriously consider deleting, and these include reading word for word from a script without ever looking up, or turning your back on the class to read a power point slide. In both of these ways, you break the connection between teacher and student.

I personally like to move around the classroom engaging different sections of the class, and briefly turning to the power point slide to see where I am in the class. I also realize that some instructors use the podium for information. Either way, make sure you are glancing around the class to engage all – in an 85 minute class, there are multiple opportunities to do so!

THOUGHTS

AS YOU CAN TELL, A THEME THAT RUNS THROUGH THIS NEWSLETTER AND THE WHOLE WE-TRI IS THAT THERE IS NO ONE BEST WAY, NO APPROVED REQUIRED OLLI WAY TO TEACH

INSTEAD, WHAT WE HOPE TO DO IS TO PROVIDE A WIDE MENU OF POSSIBLE CHOICES OF TEACHING TECHNIQUES AND OTHER IDEAS THAT THEN INSTRUCTORS CAN PICK AND CHOOSE AMONG.

SEND ALL TO THE EDITOR AT DUNPHYJJ@AOL.COM AND WE WILL MAKE SURE TO SHARE IT WITH OTHER INSTRUCTORS.

Closing Thoughts

At the risk of offending some of the other great instructors in the instructor cadre, I would like to look back over classes I have taken and instructors I have enjoyed.

I would like to consider three instructors – Jim Anderson, Dan Sherman and Elisabeth Wolpert. In a way, we have an objective way of determining that these are first class instructors – every class they teach has a long waiting list.

Each one of these instructors teaches radically different subjects – Civil War military history, film and stage musicals, and European History. But what is more important to us is that each uses an equally radical difference in teaching techniques, particularly in the area of technology.

This use includes overhead projectors, power points or videos. What it does demonstrate is there is no approved, required method of teaching OLLI classes. The most important technique is one that the instructor is comfortable with – nothing is more obvious and off putting to students than instructors not being true to themselves

So what is the lesson to be learned? Well, back when I was in graduate school in Mason working on my degree in education, the one thing that stood out in the classes was the idea to steal from other instructors what works and then to have your ideas likewise stolen. Next time you take a class as a student, concentrate not only on the subject matter but the teaching techniques. If you find something that works for the instructor and for you, then try it. If there is something the instructor uses that you don't think would work for you, then, as the Bard would say, to thine own self be true!

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