What can ITLAL do for Graduate Students?

The Institute for Teaching, Learning and Academic Leadership (ITLAL) is dedicated to improving the professional lives of faculty and graduate students at the University at Albany. We provide a number of services to help graduate students develop as teachers and prepare for productive and satisfying academic careers.

Courses in Teaching and Professional Development
ITLAL offers three courses to help graduate students planning for faculty careers. Each is offered once a year and may be taken for 0-1 credit hours.

Seminar in College Teaching (Fall offering)
Most faculty have never been taught to teach, and it is easy to believe that it takes natural talent to be good at it. But great teachers are great because they approach teaching as systematically as they approach their research: they study empirical evidence, apply it thoughtfully to their own teaching, and reflect on how it affects their students. You will take that approach in this class as you design a course using the research we have about human learning and motivation. That research shows that undergraduate students are capable of learning, will work hard, and bring valuable knowledge and experience to courses that are well designed. If you are planning a career in academe, teaching will take up large amounts of your time, even at research institutions. Our course will help you make the most of that time so that teaching can be energizing and rewarding for you and your students!

Preparing for the Professoriate (Spring offering)
New faculty often find themselves struggling as they get started in their career. They may not have understood what the faculty role really required, or they expected their new institution to be like the research school where they received their graduate training (and so were unprepared for a different setting). This doesn’t have to happen to you. We’ll let you in on secrets about how to be a quick starter in academe—secrets that will not only make you more effective on the job market, but will set you on the path to tenure! In this course, you will examine the different kinds of faculty careers open to you, prepare for the academic job market, and put together a plan to hit the ground running as a new assistant professor ready to balance the research, teaching, and service required to start your trajectory toward a satisfying career.

Becoming a Reflective Teacher (Fall offering)
Even if you aren’t yet on the market, you should be already thinking about how you will communicate your teaching skills to busy (and sometimes grumpy) search committee members. For both the job market, and eventually for tenure, you will need to concisely articulate your values and strengths as a teacher and be ready to provide evidence to show that these guide your classroom practice. In this course, you will work with your colleagues to thoughtfully reflect on your beliefs and practices as a teacher, and work together to refine the documents that will eventually become your teaching portfolio (and serve as an initial draft of what may become your tenure portfolio!).

Future Faculty and Teaching Development Program (FFTDp)
The FFTDP is a long-term program (designed to be completed over 2 or more years) to help graduate students develop the skills requisite for good teaching practice, prepare for the academic job market, and prepare for a successful transition to faculty careers. Students in the program complete the three courses described above and participate in either 3 short teaching-focused workshops or 1 multi-day Instructional Leadership Academy. This combination of courses and pedagogical workshops prepares students for the variety of roles and responsibilities of a faculty member and provides the opportunity and space for students to start exploring their broader career goals. Given that most faculty at any institution (whether teaching or research-oriented) spend a great deal of their time on teaching, particularly in the first year, the program engages participants with the scholarship of teaching and learning so that they
become more confident and efficient teachers. This program complements existing departmental professionalization programs on campus, while at the same time making it possible for students in departments that do not have such programs to prepare for the role of college or university faculty member. See our website (itlal.org) for an application form.

Academic Job Market Workshops
ITLAL job market workshops are designed to help graduate students face the job market with confidence. Participants leave these sessions better equipped to navigate the academic job market and learn effective strategies to create powerful application materials, such as CVs, cover letters, and teaching statements. Workshops also help tackle job interviews and teaching demonstrations.

Teaching Workshops
ITLAL workshops are more than presentations on teaching. They are designed to replicate the experience of active, inquiry-driven learning so participants can imagine and reflect on what it might be like to try an evidence-based strategy, method, or technique in their own classrooms. ITLAL events also present opportunities for faculty and graduate students to build community across the university by interacting with colleagues outside their home departments.

One-on-One Consultations
Sometimes you need to talk with someone about teaching or the academic job market, and ITLAL consultants are here to help! Teaching consultations include support for the design of courses and learning activities, assessment of student learning, assignment design, or any other questions you may have. We also offer consultations to help you prepare for the academic job market, including review of materials like CV’s, cover letters, teaching statements, and diversity statements. We can also help you prepare for interviews. All consultations with ITLAL staff are completely confidential.

Feedback on Teaching
ITLAL offers several services to help instructors receive non-evaluative feedback on their teaching. One of ITLAL’s most requested services is the Early Semester Survey, an anonymous survey intended to generate actionable data on how students are responding to a course that is underway. It’s also possible for instructors to request an observation of an in-person or virtual class meeting or an online class. All data collected is held in confidence between ITLAL consultants and clients. These are all effective ways to both assess your teaching and to document your teaching.

Teaching Portfolios
More and more job ads are requesting “evidence of teaching effectiveness” and teaching portfolios as part of the application process. Creating a portfolio can help future faculty keep track of and better communicate their teaching experiences and is excellent preparation for academic job interviews. ITLAL offers support for making key decisions about how to curate the elements that belong in a portfolio.

Web Resources
ITLAL’s website contains a wide array of resources for graduate students who are teaching and planning faculty careers. Please visit itlal.org and click on the “Graduate Student Programs” tab to explore these resources and to connect to ITLAL.

Media Services
ITLAL offers services that allow you to digitize your existing media into formats that can easily be made available for students in your courses in the campus-wide streaming media service, Ensemble Video. This content management system allows you to upload audio and video files and manage your own content. Student access to your content can be managed through Blackboard. Bring your materials to ITLAL and we’ll help you do the rest!

Contacting ITLAL
To learn more about ITLAL or to request our services, there are several ways to reach us. Please visit our website (itlal.org), call us at 518-442-5521, or email teachingandlearning@albany.edu. Or feel free to drop by! (See directions below.)

Finding ITLAL
We are located in LI B69, on the lower level of the main campus between the University Library and the Catskill building. Use the outdoor stairwell leading down from the podium level. At the bottom of the stairway make a U-turn and enter the building through the door under those stairs. ITLAL will be directly in front of you.