

# TEACHING



**“THE STUDENTS ARE REALLY WELL-MANNERED,** and that’s just so nice. I’ve TA’d six sections of literature now, and taught a creative writing workshop. And it’s not that the students have all been invested in the material, but without exception they’ve been polite and easy to work with. They’ve all been very receptive to instruction. I haven’t had any kids who just seemed to want to make trouble or anything. And my students now, my fiction writers, they’ve already improved. The improvement that they’ve shown already has been really encouraging. It makes me feel like I’m doing something right, that they’re learning something, like something I’m saying is getting through.”

- KATE

**“I LOVE TEACHING.** When I was first coming here, I was upset that I wasn’t going to get to teach my own classes out of the gate, and I’m so glad now that I didn’t have to do that. That would have been disaster phase. It was nice to have an introduction, where a professor sort of guides you through it. [TA-ing] was more administrative time than I thought it was going to be, though, and way more than I would like to spend. Like, the amount of time that I would have to spend screwing with Blackboard, and it wouldn’t work; or answering emails that I shouldn’t have to answer, that kind of thing. I think that’s *the* most frustrating thing about teaching, and about the program in general. I don’t know that there’s a way to correct it; I guess it’s just a necessary evil. But, anyway, in both of my TA situations, discussion is such that you have almost complete freedom in the sections that you teach, so I used that space intentionally to see, you know, ‘Does this exercise work? Do the students respond to this idea?’ And so now, going into [teaching] my own classes, I have some things to throw at my students that maybe they haven’t seen

before. For someone who wants to teach, that's great. And I'll have designed my own workshop, so that's great. It's turned out to be exactly what I needed." - VIRGINIA

"I FOUND TEACHING WORKSHOPS really inspiring. Which, it might be weird, but I loved it. I mean, you always have your shthead students, but you can either spend all your time complaining about them, or just, you know, do something else. I mean, if you don't get mad at them, if you just work around it, it can be really fun. The last workshop I taught, this girl who started off not caring about anything ended up writing about her uncle, who, like, what's it called when you carry drugs? Muling? Yeah. He used to make her mule until she was like sixteen. And it was the most beautiful, amazing story. And she was like, 'I didn't know I could write about that.' And I was like, 'Yes, you can write about that.' [Laughing] She was so proud, you know. And it served a greater function in her life. It really reminds you of what's wonderful about writing. So, yeah, I loved teaching workshops. TA-ing's way harder. It takes up way more time." - JIMMY

TA-ING FOR ME HAS BEEN super empowering and inspiring fifty percent of the time, and just hell the other fifty percent. There's a lot of different factors that come into play. When I have a great TA session, an amazing discussion, and people thank me afterwards, that's awesome. It makes me feel so good, and makes me confident in myself as a writer and a thinker. But then there's other ones where people aren't doing the reading, or I just screw it up, didn't plan it out right or something, and it'll just be really frustrating. And it's just hard for me to reconcile that, you know. And the grading part of it just undeniably *sucks*. [Laughing] I mean, let's be real. . . . The best is when you diverge from this set trajectory of what you're trying to do, and you actually let them talk, and guide them. I'm looking forward to having more conversations like that when I'm teaching [a creative writing workshop] this summer. Sometimes it's impossible, but when it happens, it's amazing, you know." - MARTY

**“I’VE LEARNED SO MUCH MORE** from teaching literature than I ever, ever imagined I would. It’s really nice to be able to bring that to bear in my own work, and just in conversations in workshop. You know, if people mention famous pieces now, chances are I’m pretty familiar with them cause I’ve not only read them, but I’ve taught them. I’ve learned a lot about different movements, different writers, different techniques. Teaching has been a really good learning experience on multiple levels. And I actually don’t hate it. [Laughing] I expected to hate it. Truthfully, I expected it to be really difficult. And it’s really not bad at all. The grading can take up a lot of time, yeah, but I’m really grateful to have the experience to learn how to [teach] here, because getting an MFA, most career options with that involve teaching. If I’d gone on the job market with no experience at all, you know, I’d have been really intimidated trying to apply for a job. So even though it’s been good and bad, in different ways, I’m grateful that I’ve gotten the experience to learn how to do it. That’s huge. In terms of career development in the program, I think that’s one of the major parts.”

- KATE

