The Teaching Portfolio

Why Assemble a Teaching Portfolio?
- To show the “process” of teaching (Formative)
  - Encourages you to reflect on your teaching in order to improve.
  - Long and comprehensive.
- To show the “product” of teaching (Summative)
  - Very tailored, shorter, and polished version that you will send with a Job Application.

What Are the Basic Elements of a Portfolio for the Job Market?

Table of Contents
- Portfolios can be over 100 pages. A table of contents is necessary.

Teaching Statement
- Creates the narrative of who you are as a teacher. What is important to you? How do you teach? Be concise and concrete

List of Courses taught
- If the statement is what and how you teach, this is where you can list the when and where!
  Standard information here includes course name (no numbers or acronyms, please!), level, and enrollment. Departments might matter for interdisciplinary jobs. Spell out things like gen ed or JYW requirements. No need to describe the course or what you did in it. Make clear what is TA and what is “sole instructor” or “instructor of record.” (TO is not a common acronym.)

Sample Past Syllabi
- Evidence that you can teach. Evidence that you understand the realities of grading, cheating, how much reading to assign, etc. Make minor changes based on institution type.

Proposed Courses
- Tailor to department needs and job description, but do not duplicate! Reflect new trends in field or pedagogy. If asked to teach grad classes, this is a great place to demonstrate that you are prepared to do so.

Evaluations
- Follow instructions, if any. Do not overwhelm with volume. Quantitative is more persuasive (even if problematic).

All of these combine to create a narrative of you as a teacher. Choose wisely!

* Yes, there are better choices than others. But there is no way to read anyone’s mind (half the time committees don’t really know what they want!) and there is only so much you can learn from googling the department. Craft the best professional version of you and send off the applications!
Materials in a Portfolio: Teaching Evaluations

There are many ways to format the data. There are no real wrong ways, but you want to appear truthful (not hiding anything) and make this section short and easy to skim. A standard format is:

**Page 1: Quantitative Overview**
Summarize your scores into an easily scanned table. You don’t have to include everything, but anything that appears later should also be here. Make sure the scale for quantitative data is clear (1-5 or 1-4 with 1, 4, or 5 as the highest?) There may also be an elegant way to note response rate or department average to help the reader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Question (On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being agree strongly, 3 neutral, and 1 disagree strongly.)</th>
<th>Introduction to Psychology; Fall 2001</th>
<th>Introduction to Psychology; Spring 2002</th>
<th>Abnormal Psychology; Fall 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The instructor explained the course objectives clearly</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The instructor was well prepared for class sessions</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Page 2: Qualitative Overview**
Compile sample comments...

- Divide them by chronologically or by theme (feedback, use of technology, etc.)
- Choose comments that show evidence of your teaching, not that just comment on your general (vague) awesomeness. Example “I really liked the use of movies – they helped me to understand the lecture better” is way more helpful for a search committee than “Prof rocks!” (Include one or two comments about your awesomeness anyway!)

**Optional: Quantitative Overview of Individual Classes**
Consider including the results page(s) from UMass with the chart that compares you to other classes, if favorable. If you do this, be consistent with what you include for other classes. This more detailed breakdown will have helpful details like response rate, SD, and department averages. But be careful that these can be easily read by someone not from your university (ie. explain acronyms, course numbers, etc).

**Last: The Complete Set**
To demonstrate “objectivity” you can include a complete set of student responses (scan both front and back). This demonstrates that you are not hiding super negative comments.

**CAREFUL**
Beware mixing TO and TA records. If you have substantial TO work, you can even skip the TA. Make sure to label carefully!

**What if my evaluations aren’t great?**
You might have had a tough semester or a rough beginning. That’s okay. You might consider ways to “tailor” the selection of evaluations to avoid that class – but that’s not always possible (or honest). Instead, if that one class is pretty rough, you may include a short paragraph that very briefly addresses how you are improving as a teacher. Have you taken steps to address those negative evaluations? What did you do? Did it work? DO NOT make this a paragraph of excuses about life or class constraints (required, class size, 8am, etc...)
You Can Write a Short Introduction to Your Syllabus to Give Context

1. Who are your students? Are they first-year? Seniors? Majors/non-majors? Working professionals? Describe how your syllabus is designed to communicate to these students and how it both challenges and offers support for their learning. Match the quantity and difficulty of the work to the students (this may vary for different applications)! Mismatches are red flags for hiring committees.

2. How have you planned or revised the course to prepare students to fulfill the course learning objectives? What instructional techniques do you plan to use in class? What kinds of learning do you expect to take place out of class?

3. Briefly discuss the sequence of topics and assignments in your course. What were your goals for these assignments? Were they reached? Why or why not? How would you change them in the future?

4. Give a rationale for your grading scale and assessment techniques. How do these fit into your course objectives? How do they give students opportunities for feedback and improvement?

All syllabi should include the following:

• Information that helps the reader understand the context of the course:
  o Title of class
  o Audience for class and/or Prerequisites (majors, non-majors, year in school)
  o Meeting information (how many times per week and for how long?)
  o Instructor contact information, including office hours

• The what and how of the course:
  o Course description
  o Learning goals and objectives
  o Required texts or material
  o Calendar of topics, readings, assignments

• Information that shows you are aware of student abilities and the realities of the classroom
  o Brief descriptions of assignments, exams, assessments with explanation of grading.
  o Course Policies (late assignments, make-up exams, attendance, classroom conduct, technological devices use during classes, academic honesty, disability, etc. !)

What if I was the TA in a course?

• Present a syllabus you have used (but not created) and discuss how you implemented it in your particular section of the course. Always give credit where credit is due.

A Course Proposal (Mini-Syllabus)

• Create a syllabus or short course proposal for a course you are likely to teach. TAILOR TO JOB.
• Include information that helps the reader understand the context of the course:
  o Title, approximate level, estimated enrollment
• Also include the what and how of the course:
  o Paragraph on course topic and why is it significant for students
  o Paragraph on how you will teach, mentioning interesting readings or assignments
  o Topics covered by class or week (abbreviated version of the syllabus calendar)
Possible Components of a Teaching Portfolio

Standard items are marked with an asterisk. Other suggestions are given for each category.

1. **Your Thoughts About Teaching**
   - *Reflective “teaching statement”* describing your personal teaching philosophy & strategies
   - Personal statement describing your teaching goals for the next few years

2. **Documentation of Your Teaching**
   - *A list of courses taught and/or TA-ed, with enrollments*
   - *Number of advisees, graduate and undergraduate*
   - *Syllabi* (including course descriptions, details of content, objectives, assessment, & teaching methods)
   - Assignments, exams, and quizzes (graded and ungraded)
   - Handouts, problem sets, lecture outlines
   - Descriptions and examples of visual materials used
   - Descriptions of uses of technology in teaching
   - Videotapes of your teaching
   - Descriptive or reflective writing about the success of various assignments, exams, lecture/discussion topics, etc...

3. **Teaching Effectiveness**
   - *Summarized student evaluations of teaching*
   - *Written comments from students on class evaluations*
   - Comments from a peer observer or a colleague who has seen you teach
   - Letters from students, preferably unsolicited
   - Letters from course head, division head or chairperson
   - Statements from colleagues in the department, regarding the preparation of students for advanced work

4. **Honors, Awards, or Recognitions**
   - *Teaching awards from department, college, or university*
   - *Teaching awards from profession*
   - *Invitations based on teaching reputation to consult, give workshops, write articles, etc.*
   - *Requests for advice on teaching by committees or other organized groups*

5. **Activities to Improve Instruction (can also be included in teaching statement)**
   - Participation in seminars or professional meetings on teaching
   - Design of interdisciplinary or collaborative courses or teaching projects
   - Use of new methods of teaching, assessing learning, grading
   - Preparation of a textbook, lab manual, courseware, etc.
   - Description of instructional improvement projects developed or carried out

6. **Contributions to the Teaching Profession and/or Your Institution (include if relevant)**
   - Publications in teaching journals
   - Papers delivered on teaching
   - Reviews of forthcoming textbooks
   - Service on teaching committees
   - Work on curriculum revision or development

7. **Materials Demonstrating Student Learning (less common)**
   - Students’ papers, essays, or creative works
   - Scores on standardized or other tests, before and after instruction
   - Students’ lab books or other workbooks
   - Graded work from the best and poorest students, with teacher’s feedback to students
   - Instructor’s written feedback on student work

Adapted from Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, “Teaching Portfolio,” https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-portfolios/