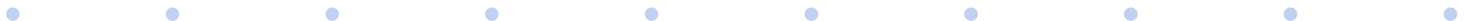


CLASSROOM CHALLENGES

Moderator

R. Paul Duncan, Ph.D.

Senior Associate Dean, Graduate School and
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Policy

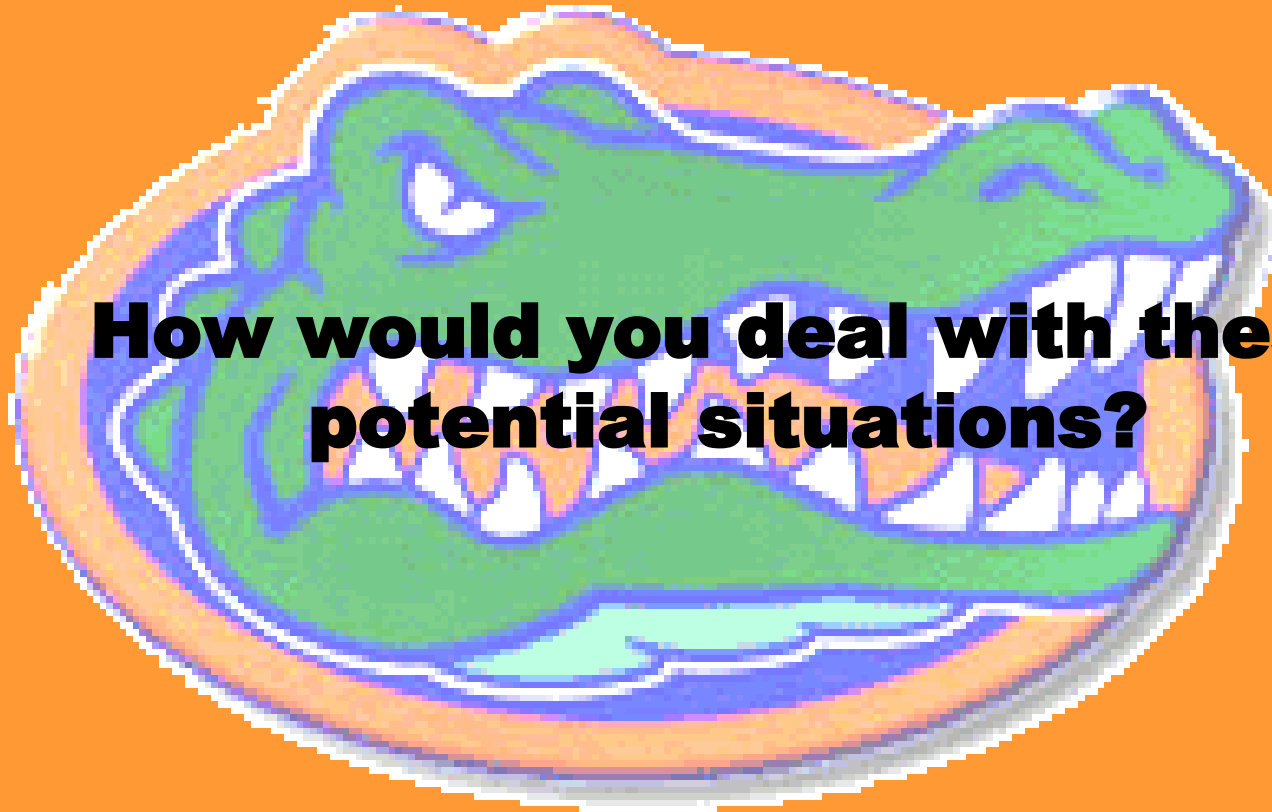


Faculty and Administrative Panel

- **Dr. John Abbitt**
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering
- **Dr. Julie Abrams-Bernier**
Psychologist,
Counseling and Wellness Center
- **Dr. Heather White**
Interim Dean of Students,
Dean of Student's Office
- **Ryan R. Fuller, Esq.**
Senior University Counsel,
Office of the General Counsel
- **Dr. Constance Shehan**
Professor,
Sociology



CLASSROOM CHALLENGES



**How would you deal with these
potential situations?**

Scenario 1 – Academic Dishonesty

William, a TA teaching COM 1010 Introduction to Communications, was pleased with his interactions with his class. The class was very complimentary about his teaching. He felt engaged with the class and was on a first-name basis with the students.

His problems began during the first major examination. He distributed the tests, talked about academic honesty, asked for questions, and then turned his attention to studying for the exam he was scheduled to take in a few hours. He occasionally heard rustling and looked up, but nothing serious registered with him.

Later, six students independently reported seeing classmates swapping exams. He was devastated to hear that his students cheated and promised to investigate.

Scenario 1 - Discussion

1. What specific steps should William take to address this situation?
2. Did he help create an environment that enabled cheating?
3. Aren't students really responsible for their own conduct?
4. What steps should he take to assure that cheating does not occur again?

Scenario 2 – Office Hours

At the beginning of the semester, Laura, a struggling student in Teaching Assistant John's class, used to visit John during office hours whenever she did not understand the class material. John thought the sessions were helpful, and he felt that he was establishing a real mentoring relationship with Laura.

But as the semester progressed, Laura no longer sought help during office hours, even though she performed badly on some of her exams.

When John asked Laura why she no longer came to him for help, she avoided answering the question and simply left the class.

The next day, she asked the department's undergraduate coordinator to remove her from John's class because she said he would repeatedly rub her back and put his arm around her as they were working in his office.

John did not deny the charges, but maintained that he was simply fulfilling his role as a caring teacher and meant nothing at all sexual by these actions.

Scenario 2 - Discussion

1. Do John's actions constitute sexual harassment?
2. Was Laura right to report John?
3. What actions should John expect to happen now?

Scenario 3 – Stereotyping

In TA Gerardo's class, two very tall, muscular African American students sit in the back of the room. They are very attentive, participate in class discussions, and complete all of their assignments on time.

Impressed by these students, Gerardo decided to express his satisfaction with their performance in front of the entire class. He said, "I just want you guys to know that you are two of the hardest working student-athletes I have ever met. Keep up the good work."

One of the young men stood up and said in an angry tone, "I am not an athlete." He left class early and did not come to class the next session.

Scenario 3 - Discussion

1. Since Gerardo's comment was intended as a compliment, is Gerardo responsible for the student's angry reaction?
2. What should Gerardo do now?
3. Do you think teachers should compliment specific students in class?

Scenario 4 – Communication Gap

Andreas, an international TA, is teaching his first class in the U.S. Unfortunately, his relationship with his students is strained.

He can see the students exchange glances when he explains assignments and can hear them mimic his accent when he mispronounces some difficult words.

A few days later, after having done poorly on the first two assignments, his students complain to another TA, Julie, that they weren't able to do the assignments correctly because they can't understand his English.

The students tell Julie that they want to switch to her class section.

Scenario 4 - Discussion

1. How should Andreas handle his students' taunting?
2. Should he directly confront the disgruntled students?
Why or why not?
3. How should Julie handle the students' request?
4. Should she discuss the situation directly with Andreas?
If so, should Andreas encourage the students to leave his class?
5. What can he do to improve the class dynamic?