During a classroom literature discussion, a professor asks her students if their opinion would change about two characters if they knew they were gay. Before the students give an answer, the professor announces she is gay.

In another class, a professor criticizes the United States' policy in Iraq. Following the discussion, a student files a complaint saying the professor's anti-American stance is against his values.

Faculty and Teacher Associate Development, which provides universitywide teaching support, will present similar scenarios during the interactive "Academic Rights and Responsibilities" seminar on Feb. 13. The goal is to open a discussion on how opinions differ between faculty and students on what is intellectually relevant to class subject matter and what is personal.

Students and faculty have debated for years the issue of academic freedom and responsibility. Most recently, the political climate across the country ignited the discussion and in 2006 led to the review of the University Faculty Rules.

The Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility found the rules support essential principles of academic freedom and responsibility and provide a clear process to address cases where a student believes those principles have been violated.

The FTAD seminar is one of the initiatives suggested by Mike Sherman, vice provost for academic administration, to provide information about the topic and for addressing grievances.

But faculty and TAs shouldn't expect a dry lecture about the do's and don'ts of academic rights and responsibilities, said Alan Kalish, FTAD director.

Instead, the InterAct Diversity Players, a group of undergraduate students, will act out vignettes that focus on the issues between faculty and students.

"We will look at some of the interactions that may arise when students feel they have been treated unfairly on the basis of political opinions, religious beliefs or other personally held tenets," Kalish said.

The seminar will also address students who resist learning about important subjects because their prior opinions are challenged.

Robin Post, director of InterAct Diversity Players, said students practice the vignettes during their class.

"Students come to class and discuss the experiences they've had with professors. Some of them lead to vignettes we perform," Post said. "Our goal is to have our work focus on social change."

Following the troupe's performance, participants will talk about the issues and strategies to address them, Kalish said. During the discussion, troupe members will remain in character to provide a better understanding about why the students or faculty portrayed made the decisions they did.

"It is so rare for students and faculty to have discussions about the process of education. We believe the interaction will better start a conversation," Kalish said.

The seminar is one of many FTAD offers during the academic year to provide ongoing professional development to the 150 to 210 new faculty and approximately 2,500 new TAs added each year.

"Many faculty are hired at Ohio State for their research skills and oftentimes they have not taught in the classroom before they come here. We offer ongoing professional training to help them, but it's not just about teaching skills and tips," Kalish said.

Through FTAD efforts, faculty learning communities have been developed that allow a small group of faculty who are interested in thinking and talking about important issues in higher education to gather for discussions. The group, calling itself TOAST or The Ohio State Association of the Scholarship of Teaching, meets regularly to discuss ways to improve teaching methods.

"With more and more accountability put on faculty for student learning outcomes, we are finding these communities playing an important role. What we teach faculty or a TA in 90 minutes isn't going to change their lives, but the discussions in TOAST helps foster the scholarship of teaching and learning," Kalish said.

The free seminar will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Feb. 13 in 300 Younkin Success Center. To register, call 292-3644 or e-mail ftad@osu.edu. For other seminars, visit ftad.osu.edu.