

Rules & Regulations Handbook
for Philosophy Graduate Student
TAs, RAs, & AIs

Guide to Using The Rules & Regulations Handbook

The rules and regulations handbook explains how Teaching Assistants are chosen, trained, and evaluated. It outlines your responsibilities as a TA. It also explains the parameters for interacting with the Instructor whom you are assisting, other TAs who assist in the same class, and the undergraduate students who are taking the class. Additional sections are included containing information specifically relevant to AIs and Readers.

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1. Introduction

The Department of Philosophy offers several kinds of teaching opportunities to its students: Teaching Assistantships (TAs), Associate Instructorships (AIs) and Readerships. This section of the philosophy graduate student handbook describes Departmental policies for students who will be teaching in one of these capacities. TAs lead discussion sections for lecture/discussion format courses. AIs offer courses of their own. Readers do grading, sometimes in courses with no TA and sometimes to supplement TA grading activities. Both TAs and Readers may work in courses taught by AIs.

2. Teaching Assistants

TA Selection Process

Students wishing to assist in courses for a given academic year must submit an application in the preceding year (an application will be left in your mailbox and you'll receive an email notifying you that it's time to submit your teaching preferences) The minimum GPA for applicants is 3.0. Other considerations relevant to selection are previous years of funding received, general teaching experience, expertise in specific courses to be taught and evidence of the quality of previous teaching work. The Department meets at the end of the academic year to decide on offers of TAships.

Getting Hired

Jackie Teeple will contact you the summer before the academic year in which you will be TAing. You will need to set up an appointment with her to fill out the hiring paperwork. Please be sure you are enrolled for 12-units before going to see Jackie.

Sickness and Emergencies

The TA should notify the instructor as soon as possible if unable to meet section. A replacement should be suggested and recruited if possible.

Attendance at Lecture

TAs are expected to attend all lectures.

Office Hours

Each TA should schedule at least two hours a week. In a multiple TA course, a sheet which lists all the TAs' and the Instructor's office hours should be distributed to the class.

Workload

Each TA is hired to work a twenty hour week. While it is understood that there will be some deviation from the twenty hour norm in either direction in a given week, it is expected that the average over the quarter will closely approximate twenty hours worked per week. Graduate Division policy is that TAs must be enrolled for 12 units. Four of these units may be taken as a 396 (TA Practicum) with the instructor being assisted. These units are earned in consideration of the pedagogical training received while carrying out the duties of a teaching assistant.

The following activities are included in the TA workload:

- Attending lecture
- Leading discussion sections
- Reading course materials
- Holding office hours
- Holding discussions with students outside office hours
- Consulting with the instructor or other TAs about the course
- Grading
- Calculating grades

TAs are not generally expected to read drafts of students' papers. If you wish to do so, check with the Instructor and other TAs to ensure that your policy is consistent with theirs. The norm is for TAs to look over sections of papers and/or outlines students bring to office hours, but not to read entire papers, whether printed or received via email.

Course Materials

The Department provides desk copies of course texts free of charge to all TAs. Any materials distributed to the class should be received by the TA and kept as reference material. It is useful to keep some extra copies of the syllabus and assignments as well as other course handouts, as students frequently lose them or fail to attend the classes during which they are distributed.

Photo-copying of syllabi, tests, paper assignments and enrollment sheets is provided free of charge. See Julie in the Philosophy Dept. office to get the TA copy code (this differs from your personal copy code).

Discussion Sections

The TA must always arrive at their sections on time and prepared. Preparation includes having:

- read with care all the texts
- reviewed lecture notes
- clarified with the instructor any questions regarding lecture material
- generated a list of issues you wish to discuss
- assembled information on assignments

The primary purpose of discussion sections is discussion, not lecture. Thus the format of the section should be one that facilitates student participation to the fullest extent possible. Clarification of course material will go on, but it should be secondary to the task of developing students' critical skills in the evaluation of argumentation.

Grading

It is the responsibility of the instructor to establish uniform standards for grading and to communicate them clearly to their TA(s). In courses with multiple TAs, this requires that the instructor work with the TAs to insure that no student is unduly aided or penalized by having his or her work graded by one TA (or reader) rather than another. It is essential that the TA be certain of the instructor's grading criteria before any work is graded. It is also desirable that grading criteria be made clear to students before any assignment is due.

When grading papers, the TA should take care to give as many comments as possible in the time available for grading. Comments regarding both composition and content are useful for the student. Specific comments are important, but it is essential that some general comments be made at the end of the paper.

When returning papers to students, the TA should explain the grading procedure. Students like to see the breakdown of the grades (i.e. how many in the class received each level of grade). The TA should also let students know of adjudication procedures, which the TA should work out in advance with the instructor.

Grading should be done as quickly as is reasonable and grades should be reported to the instructor as soon after they are tabulated as is mutually convenient. The instructor is responsible for giving the grades. This requires that the instructor be responsible for the compilation of the grades. It is the responsibility of the TA to keep accurate records of the assignments which he or she is grading and to inform the instructor of these grades when they are assigned. Under no circumstances should any grading data be left on computers accessible to unauthorized personnel. Once the course has been completed all records should be turned over to the instructor. At that point, the TA is absolved of any further record-keeping responsibility.

Cheating

UC Davis students are bound by the Standards of Conduct for Students. The academic code is an honors system, according to which it is the responsibility of students to report observed cases of cheating. The TA should accordingly remind students of this responsibility. Students should also be reminded that there are severe disciplinary penalties for those found guilty of cheating.

Cheating on paper assignments generally takes the form of plagiarism. It should be kept in mind that many students are unfamiliar with the nature of plagiarism: they may think that the best report is the one which copies out material from good sources and organizes it well. It is a good idea to inform students of the nature of plagiarism before the work is due. Students are permitted to give assistance or share ideas in the composition of the paper only at the discretion of the instructor, so the extent of co-operative work permitted should be announced. Any prohibitions specific to the course should be made clear.

If cheating is suspected, the TA should report it immediately to the instructor. If there is a good case that cheating did occur, it will be turned over by the instructor to the Student Judicial Board (SJB). The SJB can resolve cases by informal disposition (as occurs in most cases) or by formal adjudication.

TA Training

Before the beginning of Fall Quarter, every student who is appointed to a teaching position and has not yet taught a section will be required to attend an orientation session conducted by the Philosophy Department.

The Teaching Resources Center (TRC) is responsible for training of graduate student teachers on campus. Every TA should be familiar with the contents of the TRC's TA Handbook. TAs are encouraged to attend workshops given by the Teaching Resources Center and to use the video-taping and other services of the TRC.

Evaluation

At the end of the quarter, TAs are to distribute course evaluations in all their sections. The evaluations are to be returned to the Department office by a member of the class. They may not be read until grades are turned in, but they should be read thereafter. They are also available for the TA to photo-copy for purposes of job placement.

At the end of the quarter, an evaluation form to be filled out by the supervising instructor is solicited and placed in the TA's file. The instructor may attend at least one section for purposes of evaluation, but courtesy dictates that the TA be consulted about which section is to be audited. The letter becomes part of the student's record, and it will be used as evidence in assigning future TA-ships. The Graduate Division stipulates that poor evaluations can be grounds for denial of an application.

See "TA Advisory Committee Procedures" (next page) for detailed information about TA evaluations made by the department.

TA Advisory Committee Procedures

Purpose of the Committee:

1. To help Teaching Assistants to develop the best possible teaching skills.
2. To provide information to be retained in each student's teaching file and used in preparing teaching letters for students' dossiers when they go on the job market.
3. To be used as evidence of teaching competence when a student is a candidate for funding beyond the period of guaranteed support (if the student is making normal progress).
4. It is expected that information provided by the committee will also be used in determining possible recipients of departmental teaching awards and nominees for the University's graduate student teaching award.

Composition:

Four members of the department, plus the Graduate Adviser (GA) ex officio. (It is not expected that the GA will be involved in the routine operations of the committee, but it may be appropriate for the GA to participate in the spring evaluation meeting of the committee.)

Who will be visited:

Each student will be visited once during each of the first three quarters in which he or she has teaching assistant appointments. Each student will also be visited once more by the end of his or her fifth year. Additional visits will be planned as judged advisable by the committee and as requested by students.

Students teaching their own courses for the first time either during the year or during summer sessions shall arrange to be visited by a committee member so as to have an additional report on the teaching of their own course in their teaching files. It is expected that a regular committee member will visit, but a faculty member not on the committee may be asked to visit when no regular committee member is available.

Procedure

1. The visits will be conducted by members of the committee. Insofar as reasonably possible, TAs will be visited by a different faculty member each of the four quarters.
2. When possible visits will take place during the third or fourth week of the quarter (to enable teaching assistants time to establish the section before the visit, but also allowing for time during the same quarter for follow up if needed).
3. The visits will be scheduled by agreement between the visitor and the student being visited.
4. The visiting faculty and the TA will meet before the visit in order for the TA to brief the visitor about the organization and intended aims of the TA section, as well as to inform the visitor of any instructions from the faculty member on the course regarding how the TAs are to run their sections, and to give both the TA and visitor an opportunity to address any questions about the visit.
5. The visitor will meet in person with the teaching assistant after the meeting to discuss the visitor's observations and impressions. The visiting faculty member will, as appropriate, provide feedback regarding current teaching strengths and weaknesses and offer specific suggestions for improvement.
6. After the personal meeting the visitor will write a report, using the committee's report form, and using the questions on the form as a guideline. Students will be given a copy of the report on the visit to their section, and a copy of the report will be placed in each student's teaching file, a file separate from the student's general file.

TA Advisory Committee Meetings:

1. The Committee will meet early in the fall quarter and again, if necessary, early in the winter and spring quarters, to assign visitors to teaching assistants.
2. The Committee will meet late in the spring quarter to review their observations of students and the committee's procedures. This meeting will take place before the department's spring meeting at which the progress of students is discussed.

Additional Responsibilities:

The Chair of the committee will be responsible for organizing the fall **TA training session** for incoming students and such subsequent training sessions as the committee deems useful or as the graduate students may request.

The committee will be responsible for reviewing the teaching files of graduate students who will be entering the job market and for writing a **teaching letter** to be included in each student's dossier summarizing his or her strengths and accomplishments.

In January-February of each year, at the direction of the committee Chair, members of the committee will review files of eligible graduate students to determine, in accordance with departmental guidelines, the appropriateness of presenting the **department's Michael V. Wedin Teaching Award** to one GSTA. Any award will be presented at the annual ceremony at which the department presents undergraduate citations.

As the committee reviews files in connection with the Wedin Award, a decision shall also be made regarding nominations for the **University's graduate teaching award**. In the event that a GSTA is deemed an appropriate candidate for the latter award, all relevant paper work shall be filed by the February deadline.

Multiple-TA Courses

Courses with more than one TA require special attention by the instructor. There are several areas which merit such attention. The general principle is that of equity, which has several practical applications:

- Uniformity of grading, in fairness to students.
- Division of the workload among TAs, in fairness to the TAs.
- Consistent treatment of students by TAs, in fairness to both.

It is the responsibility of the instructor to ensure uniformity of grading. If more than one TA is to grade a particular assignment, the graders and instructor should meet to establish uniform criteria for grading. They should also meet before work is returned, in order to determine that the criteria are met. Instructors should also recognize their responsibility to adjudicate problems arising from apparent failure to achieve uniform grading.

Instructors must take the 20-hour-per-week workload into account when assigning work. As for all courses with TAs, duties to be carried out should be agreed upon among the TAs and the instructor at the beginning of the quarter. It is expected that particularly undesirable duties should be distributed fairly among all TAs.

Students' opportunity to receive attention should not vary significantly from TA to TA. TAs should make themselves equally available to students through office hours and appointments. They should also adopt uniform methods for helping students with their pending assignments. There should be uniformity in the quality and quantity of comments provided on the assignments. Finally, each TA is expected to be available to discuss with students work that has been returned to them.

It is the responsibility of instructors to monitor the activities of their TAs throughout the quarter in order to assure that equity, uniformity and consistency are maintained. It is expected that the TAs will inform the instructor regularly about their activities in connection with the course.

Instructor/TA Relations

It is expected that instructors and TAs will work together closely throughout the quarter. The relationship should be based on mutual respect and an understanding that both instructors and TAs have duties outside the course which will affect the way in which they deliver instruction.

Disagreements should be worked out between the instructor and TA themselves, if at all possible. Any conflict that cannot be resolved can be taken to the Department Chair, with the understanding that the request for intervention will not in itself affect the TA's standing in the graduate program. (Of course, should further investigation reveal that the TA is at fault, there could be adverse consequences.)

TA/Student Relations

Because of the relatively small size of sections and their grading responsibilities, TAs generally are more familiar with the individual students than is the instructor. Thus they wield a great deal of power over the students. This power can be abused in various ways. Students can be intimidated or embarrassed more easily than might be imagined. Special effort should be made to treat all students with dignity.

A special case of abuse of the relationship with the student is sexual harassment. See the Student Judiciary Affairs Web page, <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/student-grievances.html>, for the University's policy on sexual harassment. It is imprudent for the TA to do anything which gives the appearance of sexual harassment. Dating or asking out students in the course, no matter how scrupulously done, can be the occasion of a sexual harassment charge, on grounds of third-party harassment.

The TA's relation to the instructor can also be abused in the course of relations with students. It is all too easy to side with the students when they have problems with the instructor. Under no circumstances should a TA comment upon the instructor's performance, or discuss aspects of the instructor's personal life, in the presence of students.

3. Associate Instructors

Many issues relevant to AIs have been covered under the TA section.

Job Description

AIs are graduate students with a Master's degree who teach their own courses. The workload of an AI is limited to one course per quarter. Most AIs teach in Summer Session, though there are occasional openings during the regular academic year. It is the responsibility of the AI to order books, develop a syllabus, give lectures, meet office hours and submit grades.

The conduct of one's own course is a heavy responsibility. There are many choices to be made, and these will play a vital role in the success or failure of the course. The following sections are intended to offer guidance in the most important facets of teaching one's own course. First-time AIs beginning to prepare their courses are urged to consult with faculty members in the area being taught.

AI Selection Process

AIs must have the following qualifications: a Master's Degree in Philosophy prior to the commencement of teaching, one year's teaching experience, and qualifications as specified by the Graduate Studies Office. The Department also expects some expertise in the area to be taught. When a course requiring an AI becomes available, the Department notifies qualified candidates, who are asked to apply for the positions. Offers are made to those candidates the Department deems best qualified.

By far the greatest number of AI positions are for the two Summer Sessions. Summer Session courses are administered by the University Extension, which does not subsidize them. As a result, only courses with proven or expected good enrollment are permitted by Extension to be offered by the Department. Once the Department is informed of the courses to be given, it offers faculty members the opportunity to teach them. Faculty participation is generally quite low, leaving a number of courses to be taught by AIs.

Before the Course Begins

The Department requests book orders of all instructors several months before the quarter begins. If an AI has not received such a request as the result of a late appointment, a book order should be turned in immediately upon appointment. A syllabus should be prepared for the first class meeting. If TAs are involved in the course, there should be a meeting with them before the course begins.

Course Materials

Systematic textbooks are easiest to work with, but in many circumstances they should not be used: either their quality is not sufficiently high or their subject matter is not appropriate. Use of anthologies, on the other hand, engenders certain risks. The quality and character of the selections may vary a great deal. Commentary by the editor(s) may be of inferior quality or at odds with the AI's understanding of the issues. Many instructors compile their own anthologies ("course readers") to overcome these difficulties.

An AI must determine that the level of difficulty of the texts is appropriate. The amount of time needed by the student to digest the material should also be taken into account in assessing the appropriateness of the text. The Department presumes that the AI has sufficient expertise to be able to select books and set the syllabus for the course. However, it reserves the right to prescribe changes in the AI's selection of materials and course content should it deem them inappropriate.

Syllabus

On the first day of the course, the AI should distribute a syllabus containing at least the following information:

- Instructor's name, office number, office phone, office hours.
- Texts
- Nature of assignments
- Date and time of the final examination
- General grading policy

Any other information, such as a detailed schedule of readings, is greatly appreciated by the students. It should be kept in mind that schedules can be broken if circumstances so dictate.

Grading

It is up to the AI to determine grading policies. It is expected that grading will conform roughly to normal grading patterns of faculty. The amount and difficulty of graded work should be appropriate to the level of the course and the resources available to do the grading. It is the responsibility of the AI to report grades to the registrar on time. Graded work should be returned to students in a timely fashion.

Office Hours

Conduct of office hours for AIs should follow the lines of those for TAs. As the person responsible for the course, the AI should be as available as possible for students, particularly if the course has no TAs.

4. Readers

Readerships are open to graduate students who are not working as TAs or AIs in the same quarter. (Although exceptions are possible, they are rare.) Readers are expected to have some expertise in the area in which they will read. Office hours are to be scheduled only for the purposes of discussing graded work with students.

The availability of Readerships is contingent on class enrollment. In general, the Department does not know whether a Reader is needed until after the beginning of classes. To facilitate the Department's attempt to find appropriate Readers, graduate students without TA support should make known to the graduate secretary their interests in reading for particular courses, prior to the beginning of the relevant quarter.

Once notified of appointment, Readers must see the Graduate Secretary to fill out employment papers. As hourly employees, Readers must submit time-sheets detailing the number of hours per day they have actually worked. The Department Manager will let the Reader know in advance how many hours are available for the quarter, and the Reader should plan time-use accordingly. Hours worked include time spent grading, holding office hours, and conferring with students about their grades outside normal office hours. Readers may also report time spent attending lecture or engaging in other activities if such time is made available by the Department. The Department Manager will inform the Reader whether funds are available to support this (or any other course-related) activity.