
GUIDELINES FOR THE DEPARTMENTAL TEACHING ASSISTANT PROGRAM (REVISED AND EXPANDED)

The BC Theology Dept. has established a system of requiring service from our doctoral students that includes working as a teaching assistant for an assigned professor. This service provides a way for the student to “give back” to the university in exchange for tuition remission and an annual stipend. It also provides valuable assistance to course instructors in their efforts to facilitate a positive learning experience in classes with significant enrollment. Finally, teaching assistantships provide an opportunity for graduate students to be mentored in the skills of course planning and classroom teaching. The success of this service obligation depends on a respectful, productive and reciprocal relationship between the course instructor and the graduate student teaching assistant. This relationship will be beneficial to both the instructor and the TA when there are clear and mutually agreed upon understandings of what this relationship entails from both parties. These guidelines articulate appropriate expectations related to teaching assistantships in our program. It should also be noted that these guidelines apply to *teaching assistants* and not to graduate/research assistants that may be funded by independent research grants or an endowed professor’s discretionary funds. *Any professor who wishes to have a teaching assistant assigned to him/her must agree to work within the guidelines outlined below.*

COMMUNICATION

1. The instructor/TA relationship depends on good communication before and during the academic term. The instructor should physically meet with his/her TA *before the course begins* in order to:
 - a) Review these guidelines;
 - b) Collaborate on the construction of the course syllabus or, at minimum, to have the instructor review the syllabus, explaining the pedagogical rationale underlying each component in the syllabus;
 - c) Agree upon the scheduling of the TA’s office hours (the norm should be 2-3hrs/week);
 - d) Specify the particular expectations the instructor has for the TA within the parameters outlined in these guidelines.
2. If a TA is being asked to grade an assignment, text or exam, the instructor should first meet with the TA to thoroughly review grading criteria and expectations. It would be beneficial for the instructor and TA to jointly go over a small sample of assignments/assessments in order to ensure that their grading expectations are in sync.
3. The instructor should meet with his/her TA(s) periodically over the course of the semester (ordinarily at least once a month) to assess the course progress, success of the course structure and assignments, TA performance and the appropriateness of the TA workload.

4. If for some reason a professor cannot make a particular class and requires the TA to substitute, every effort should be made to see that as much advance notice as possible is given and that the TA is provided with detailed instructions and adequate course materials to do a credible job of filling in. It may be preferable to cancel a class rather than put a TA in an untenable situation in which it is unreasonable to assume they can competently cover the assigned course material.

5. At the end of the semester there should be a final meeting between the instructor and the TA to a) assess the success of the course and its various components, b) evaluate the work of the TA.

PARAMETERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TEACHING ASSISTANT WORKLOAD

1. Teaching assistant assignments are made, in part, based on a determination of a professor's anticipated teaching load and class size. Ordinarily, teaching assistants are assigned to faculty who are teaching large core courses. Thus the bulk of a teaching assistant's responsibilities will be dedicated to assisting the professor with respect to one of the core courses. However, it is not illegitimate for a professor to ask for assistance regarding other courses that are part of a professor's teaching load for a given semester.

2. The ordinary work-load for a TA should be approximately 10 hours per week. Those 10 hours will include the 3 hours the TA spends attending the class itself, and additional office hours. For example, a TA who assists a 3-hour course and has 3 hours of assigned office hours should generally be asked to do no more than 4 additional hours of class service in a week. This is intended as a rough guideline. There may be particular weeks, such as during the week of a major exam, when the TA workload may need to be extended. However, according to university policy, a TA's workload *must never exceed 20 hours in any one week*. Faculty should also be sensitive to the academic workload of TAs and allow for a more modest TA workload during certain "high stress periods" such as when the TA would be taking comprehensive exams.

3. Teaching assistants may legitimately be asked to assist in a) the grading of course assignments, b) the conduct of discussion groups and review sessions, c) copying/collating of course materials, d) library work associated with the course [e.g., putting materials on library reserve], e) substitute teaching *on a limited basis and with reasonable advance warning*. *A TA should not be asked to substitute for a professor in class more than twice in a given semester.*

4. It may be appropriate, on a limited basis and mindful of the TA's overall workload, for the professor to request help with other academic tasks such as focused research projects or copy editing. However, it is never appropriate to expect a TA to perform assignments unrelated to the academic responsibilities of the professor (e.g., mailing a package or picking up laundry).

LECTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TEACHING ASSISTANT

Over the course of an academic year, the teaching assistant should have the opportunity to give two course lectures/presentations *in the presence of the instructor*. This teaching opportunity is distinct from any situation in which the TA is substituting for the instructor. This should be discussed before the beginning of the academic year so that dates and topics can be chosen that fit the both the instructor's and the TA's schedule and to ensure the TA is lecturing on a topic about which they have the requisite competence. The instructor should write up a formal written evaluation that the TA can keep for his/her teaching dossier and should meet with the TA outside of class to discuss the evaluation. A copy of this written evaluation should be sent to the graduate program director by the end of the semester in which the TA was evaluated.

REQUIRED TEACHING ASSISTANT TRAINING

All of our graduate students are required, prior to graduation, to acquire the *Certificate of Apprenticeship in College Teaching* which is administered through the Connors Family Learning Center <http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/ACT.html>. Every student must also attend a workshop on the implementation of Title IX policies regarding the obligation to report sexual assaults on campus by the end of the first semester in which they serve as a teaching assistant. These workshops will be offered as part of the department's ongoing professional development program.