



The University of Georgia

# GTA

## Teaching Assistant Newsletter

The Center for Teaching and Learning

Vol. 18, No. 2, Spring 2008

### 2007-2008 TA Mentors

Fifteen award-winning graduate teaching assistants from across campus were selected to participate in the TA Mentor Program, which is designed to prepare TAs for careers in higher education and is coordinated by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in cooperation with the Graduate School.

Before the fall semester began, the TA Mentors helped plan and facilitate the University-wide TA Orientation, an event which provided 420 new and returning graduate students with the tools and resources they would need to begin teaching at UGA.

Throughout the semester, the TA Mentors met to discuss effective teaching techniques that foster student learning and to share resources and ideas about teaching to take back to their respective departments. In addition to building individual teaching portfolios, the TA Mentors interacted with experts from across campus who spoke about current and emerging topics in higher education. Jodi Holschuh, from the Division of Academic Enhancement, spoke about the relationship between learning theory and the nature of the undergraduate learner. Lloyd Reiber, from the Department of Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology, discussed game theory and the emerging role of gaming in education. Sherry Clouser, from the Center of Teaching and Learning, reviewed the use of technology such as PowerPoint, symposium, student response systems ("clickers"), and learning management systems (e.g. Blackboard, WebCT Vista, and Sakai) to enhance student learning; and David Noah, also of CTL, provided an overview of the educational possibilities of emerging technologies such as podcasts, digital storytelling, and Second Life.

During these and other sessions, TA Mentors interact with guest speakers and with one another as they reflect upon how to improve their own teaching and the teaching environment for graduate students in their respective departments.



**Front Row** (left to right): **Sara Steger**, English; **Melinda Cro**, Romance Languages; **Tanisha Grimes**, Health Promotion; **Chandra Carpenter**, Microbiology; **Cara Gormally**, Plant Biology; **Matt Schneider**, Philosophy; **Ronita Bhattacharya**, Comparative Literature. **Back Row** (left to right): **Todd Goen**, Speech Communication; **Rachel Tambling**, Child & Family Development; **John Frye**, Geography; **Will Duncan**, Ecology; **Josh Enslin**, Romance Languages; **Daniel Seaton**, Physics; **Daleah Goodwin**, History; **Erin Winter**, Sociology.

In the Spring, the TA Mentors will continue to develop a deeper understanding of teaching and learning in higher education but will also concentrate on other areas of professional development, such as the academic job search and the transition from graduate student to professor. The program will culminate with a retreat to Sapelo Island to explore what it means to be a successful faculty member.

Recipients of the Outstanding and Excellence in Teaching Awards are invited to apply for next year's program. More information about the program can be found at [http://wwwctl.uga.edu/teach\\_asst/ta\\_mentors/ta\\_mentors.htm](http://wwwctl.uga.edu/teach_asst/ta_mentors/ta_mentors.htm).

#### TA Mentor Program Name Change in 2008-2009

In order to clarify and more accurately describe the program to prepare future faculty that is coordinated by the Center for Teaching and Learning in cooperation with the Graduate School, the TA Mentor Program will change its name to the Future Faculty Program starting in the Fall of 2008.

# Management of Large Classes

Moving from the number of students you would ideally like to have in a class to effectively teaching larger numbers requires extra planning and management techniques.

## Pre-class Planning for Large Classes

- \*Read the pedagogical literature of your discipline**  
Build on the successful strategies others have used for larger classes.
- \*Become familiar with campus instructional support**  
Plan to use a course management system, the resources of the Center for Teaching and Learning, Academic Enhancement, the Writing Center, Disability Services and other units that support teaching and learning.
- \*Plan to work cooperatively with others teaching the same course**  
Organize regular instructor and TA meetings to share materials, discuss strategies, issues and role expectations.
- \*Establish the prerequisites for the course**  
Plan to administer a basic concepts assessment to allow ill-prepared students to drop or to seek remedial help. Identify strategies and student services for reviewing basic concepts.
- \*Identify materials that reflect a variety of student interests**  
Include the contribution minorities have made to your discipline and choose materials that are relevant to a wide range of student interests and career goals.
- \*Plan for out of class learning**  
Plan for peer learning groups, on line self-paced learning, help sessions and flexible office hours.
- \*Check semester calendar**  
Note religious holidays and campus events that might influence class activities and test schedules.
- \*Check room assignment**  
Make sure you are scheduled in a room that accommodates the size of the class and the learning goals of the course. Confirm room assignment for special testing needs such as evening testing or group exams.

## Course and Classroom Expectations for Large Classes

- \*Use a syllabus as an academic contract**  
Detail all expectations, deadlines and consequences regarding academic work. Include a statement that you can not legally talk with others about a student's work unless that student has given written permission.
- \*Establish attendance and participation grades**  
Students who attend class and participate are more successful learners. Start class on time and make punctuality and readiness to learn a priority. Begin with a transition activity to get students focused on

topic. Provide in-class activities and learning that can not be duplicated out of class. Have TA use a seating chart for ease in taking attendance or collect daily signed feedback from students using class room assessment strategies or student generated test bank questions.

- \*Establish student ownership of classroom expectations**  
State your roles and expectations and let students develop and agree upon other interactions that enhance the learning environment and the consequences for those who do not follow rules.
- \*Plan to remind students of agreed upon class conduct and consequences when necessary**  
Disruptions by late arrivals or early departures, cell phone or computer use, talking or inattention inhibit learning for other students and must be addressed. Usually a general polite, but firm, reminder is all that is needed. Be realistic and minimize disruptions with rules for seating for late arrivals or early departures. Employ the agreed upon consequences.
- \*Create a student advisory group**  
Have five to seven students monitor class needs, issues and progress. Create a mechanism for all students to communicate with the advisory group on line or with a suggestion box. Meet with the advisory group regularly and listen and act upon class concerns.

## Management Strategies For Large Classes

- \*Reduce student anonymity by using names**  
Have students copy their student ID picture, and paste it to a seating chart. Use name plates. Use course management system student pages to collect information. Before individual conferences, read information.
- \*Be accessible to students**  
Arrive early, chat with different students. Schedule some office hours directly after class to facilitate student use. To encourage student interaction with you, move out into the class and use on-line discussion tools for class discussions and questions.
- \*Check delivery method**  
Use a microphone and projection system if necessary. Repeat student questions to clarify and help others hear.
- \*Eliminate paper**  
Use class management system to post all handouts. Remind students to print them out when needed.
- \*Provide a session outline**  
In advance of class, post the session outline. Expect all students to read and print out as preparation for new concepts and vocabulary. Students must come to class to complete the outline and identify the important concepts. Summarize the important points at end of each session.

**\*Vary methods to maintain student interest**

Use interactive lectures which encourage student responses via clickers or color coded cards. Reenergize class every 15-20 minutes by changing method to discussion, audio visuals or student led pairs practice. Provide out-of-class opportunities in study groups, on line or with assigned readings and field experiences.

**\*Provide frequent short writing assignments**

Use short ungraded writing assignments to help students clarify concepts. Collect one-minute papers, one-sentence summaries and definitions of important concepts to gauge student understanding. Use peer shared writing activities and feedback for short papers with specific guidelines. Include short essay exam questions reflecting what they have practiced.

**\*Demonstrate successful performance**

Model how you might think about a problem or approach a question. Provide samples of various graded material to demonstrate different levels of learning. Provide many opportunities for practice and emphasize your commitment to helping them learn. Suggest alternatives for difficult material.

**\*Suggest time management strategies**

Design large assignments with check points for different stages so students and the instructor are able to adjust their attention to each stage rather than the whole project at one time.

## Evaluation Strategies for Large Classes

**\*Provide frequent low-stakes assessment**

Ungraded and self-graded assignments encourage student preparation and responsibility for learning. Correct answers can be posted on line. Ungraded assignments can count toward participation grade.

**\*Collect student generated test questions**

Students can formulate test questions on that day's material which encourages student focus and gauges their understanding of material. Use as a test bank to create exam questions after each session. Use to take attendance and count toward participation grade.

**\*Reduce cheating with new test questions and testing methods**

Vary order of test questions and paper color of the exams to discourage cheating. Arrange for extra proctors on test days.

**\*Vary testing method to measure different levels of expertise and ways of learning**

Allow for recovery from a low test score with more frequent tests and to encourage continued engagement.

**\*Avoid handing out tests**

Put questions on projection system or use computerized testing.

**\*Eliminate make up exams and extra credit assignments**

To avoid verifying excuses and having to create make up exams, have frequent exams and allow students to drop one exam or assignment grade or provide a comprehensive exam that doubles the weight of the missed exam material.

**\*Check student ID**

Have proctors collect exams, check ID picture, signature and ID code.

**\*Post correct answer key immediately**

Use web to post answers, review frequently missed questions and as review for a comprehensive final. Give participation points to students who use the web review.

**\*Provide secure return of assignments and tests**

Fold and staple so name is visible but grade is not. Put graded material on table in alphabetical order and monitor pick up. Do not publicly post grades tied to student identity. Use course management system to post grades for student private access.

### Important Deadlines

#### Outstanding and Excellence in Teaching Awards Nominations

Due January 17, 2008

[http://www.ctl.uga.edu/teach\\_asst/outstanding\\_teacher\\_award.htm](http://www.ctl.uga.edu/teach_asst/outstanding_teacher_award.htm)  
[http://www.ctl.uga.edu/teach\\_asst/excellence\\_in\\_teaching\\_award2.htm](http://www.ctl.uga.edu/teach_asst/excellence_in_teaching_award2.htm)

#### Graduate School Teaching Portfolio Nominations

Due March 7, 2008

[http://www.isd.uga.edu/teach\\_asst/pdf/PortfolioInfoSheetS08\\_revised.pdf](http://www.isd.uga.edu/teach_asst/pdf/PortfolioInfoSheetS08_revised.pdf)

#### GRSC 7770 Teaching Seminar Assistantship Nominations

Due March 21, 2008

[http://www.ctl.uga.edu/teach\\_asst/pdf/GRSCSEMINAR08.pdf](http://www.ctl.uga.edu/teach_asst/pdf/GRSCSEMINAR08.pdf)

## Teaching Support Seminars Spring 08 GRSC 7770 & ELAN 7768/69

University policy requires that all TAs receive support for their teaching. If you have never taught at university level in the United States, you must sign up for one of the GRSC 7770 teaching support seminars or a departmental course specifically to help you develop your teaching.

If you are an international student who has not taken or achieved a score of 50 on the TSE/ SPEAK test or a 26 on the TOEFL/TAST, you must sign up for ELAN 7768 where you will be given a language evaluation and placed in the appropriate teaching support seminar. You may review the full TA Policy Statement at: [http://www.ctl.uga.edu/teach\\_asst/pdf/Fall07Policy.pdf](http://www.ctl.uga.edu/teach_asst/pdf/Fall07Policy.pdf)

**ELAN 7768-level 1** (63-215)  
Tuesday/Thursday 11:00A-12:15P

**ELAN 7769-level 2** (03-217)  
Tuesday/Thursday (11:00-12:15P)

ELAN contact Dr. Linda Harklau  
[lharklau@uga.edu](mailto:lharklau@uga.edu)

**GRSC 7770-level 3** (03-198)  
Tuesday (9:30-11:30)  
POD contact Dr. Paul Quick  
[pauquick@uga.edu](mailto:pauquick@uga.edu)

**GRSC 7770-level 4** (59-037)  
for students who have completed GRSC  
7770 level 3 and want to learn more  
about how students learn.  
Tuesday (2:00-4:45)  
POD contact Dr. Jodi Holschuh  
[holschuh@uga.edu](mailto:holschuh@uga.edu)

## The Center for Teaching and Learning

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is a support unit of the Office of the Vice President for Instruction. It is devoted to the advancement of instruction and faculty development at The University of Georgia. CTL sponsors a range of services and enrichment activities designed to assist faculty and teaching assistants with instructional matters. *Dr. Nelson Hilton* is the Director of CTL and *Dr. Jay Harriman* is the Associate Director. *Dr. Paul Quick* and *Dr. Kathleen Smith* are TA Program Co-Directors.

- \* Fall Orientation for TAs and LAs
- \* GRSC 7770 - teaching seminar
- \* TA Handbook
- \* TA Newsletter
- \* Teaching Resource File
- \* Individual Consultation
- \* University Awards for Outstanding Teaching
- \* TA Mentor Program for Future Faculty
- \* Instructional Technology Resources
- \* Teaching Seminars
- \* Web Resources on Teaching (<http://www.ctl.uga.edu/>)
- \* Teaching Portfolio Samples and Consultation
- \* University Teaching Certificate Support
- \* WebCT Help Sessions

For more information on  
**The Graduate School Interdisciplinary  
Certificate in University Teaching**  
go to:

[http://www.uga.edu/gradschool/academics/certificate\\_teaching.html](http://www.uga.edu/gradschool/academics/certificate_teaching.html)

*GTA Newsletter* is a publication of the Center for Teaching and Learning. Teaching Assistants are encouraged to submit articles for publication in this newsletter. Submissions should be forwarded to Kathleen Smith or Paul Quick.

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