

## **TEACHING ASSISTANT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

This document delineates the rights and responsibilities of TAs and Professors teaching art history in the Department of Art and Art History at UNC-Chapel Hill. It is designed to establish guidelines that can be applied to any course no matter which professor is teaching it.

### **Responsibilities of TAs**

#### I. The Basics/doing your job:

You must:

- Attend lectures. You will understand the material the students are hearing and be able to help them when they have questions. Arrange with the professor in advance if you need to miss for some reason.
- Hold weekly office hours. 2 hours per week are the university requirements. Options to this must be discussed with the professor (if s/he prefers that you are there for both hours or if one of those hours can be on a sign-up basis).
- Attend your scheduled recitation sections. Discuss with the professor if you need to miss a section meeting. The professor will assist you in arranging for another TA to cover your section, and for you to cover the other TAs in return.
- Attend weekly meetings to plan sections. Discuss with the professor if you need to miss one of these planning sessions.
- Take the online FERPA training
- Remember that the professor is in charge of the class. All TAs must follow the rules set by the professor.

Common sense behavior to make everyone's lives easier:

- Alert the professor if you notice a trend of students switching sections.
- Alert the professor if you are in another class with a student in your section.
- Respond to your students in a timely manner (within one business day is reasonable).
- Go to the professor if you have any questions, problems, etc. with the students (like health-related issues, etc.), material, or directions from professor.
- Take attendance in section if participation is part of students' grades.

#### II. The Particulars/the classroom:

Planning the Lesson

- Be prepared at section meetings. Each section will be taught with the same lesson plan. Normally each TA will take turns generating the lesson plan for

the week. If it is your turn to generate the lesson plan, do so in advance so your colleagues can see it prior to class.

- Consider these questions when designing the lesson plan:
- What are the objectives of the lesson (given by the professor)?
- What do you want the students to be able to do or know at the end of the recitation?
- What is the best way to achieve those goals?
- If you are unsure about what the answers to these questions should be talk to the professor. When planning lessons, be sure to integrate visual materials into your discussions. The exams will ask students to discuss ideas in relation to images, and while sections are not necessarily reviews of the materials, you should take the opportunity to teach and reinforce that skill.
- Unless the professor tells you otherwise, the goal is to get the students to do as much talking as possible so design the lesson around questions.
- If you're not planning the lesson plan, be sure to do all of the readings so you can participate in a discussion about the plan.

## Grading

- Grade exams, etc. according to the standards determined by the professor.
- The professor will go over the specifics of each exam and provide you with what s/he thinks the answers should contain. The professor may grade a few exams with you to show you what is acceptable and unacceptable. NOTE: If the professor has not given this to you, ASK.
- Discuss grading strategies (like grading rubrics) with professor once standards have been established.
- Complete the grading of assignments in a timely manner (two weeks is plenty of time to complete grading and return assignments to students. Consult with professor in advance if you need more time.)
- You can be expected to help write exams with the professor (TAs are NOT expected to create an entire exam, nor create the entire rubric though you may participate in both). Your contribution is important. As a contributor, you will you understand how exams are generated and see how your work as Section Leader feeds into students' overall learning experience. Because you work more closely with the students you also have a better sense at times of how they are processing the material than the professor does, so can help to determine the appropriateness of exam questions.
- Provide feedback on papers and exams so students have clear and concrete ways that they can improve.

## Other responsibilities

- You may be asked to collect student work for curriculum assessment.
- You may be asked to submit progress reports requested by advising/athletics (these can be discussed with the professor, and can also be

submitted “late” if there is no substantial grading to report on by the listed due date)

- You may be responsible for arranging exam procedures with students who are using Accessibility Services (where it happens, how it gets back to them); the professor should submit the exam and instructions based on the arrangements worked out between the TA and student

### Classroom Survival

- Learn students’ names. It will make conversation in the classroom easier if the students can refer to one another eventually by their names and make it a more comfortable place for them to talk.
- Never pretend you know an answer when you don’t and don’t make up something. Simply say you do not know it. You can then ask the student who asked the question to track down the answer and report back next time. This is a way of engaging the student in their own learning process. And/or you can also ask the professor and report back to them the next time. Either way they will eventually get the information they sought. Or, if you think it is something they should know from the lecture or the reading, ask the class if they can provide the answer.
- Don’t be afraid of silences. It is worse for them than for you and someone will eventually give in. If they don’t, try rephrasing the question.
- Reflect on how the sections go for you. What worked, what didn’t work? Bring these to the next TA meeting to brainstorm on ideas for improving.
- As the professor won’t interact closely with the students on a regular basis she or he relies on you to provide feedback about how students are processing the material, and on their general performance.
- Make use of the Center for Faculty Excellence workshops and publications. They are very helpful resources. <http://cfe.unc.edu/>

### Resources you may need or want to make use of:

- Honor Code: <http://honor.unc.edu/>
- Academic Success Programs for Students with LS and ADHD: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/>
- Plagiarism tutorial: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/plagiarism/>
- Dean of Students: <http://deanofstudents.unc.edu/>
- Office for Undergraduate Research: <https://our.unc.edu/>
- Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/>
- Counseling and Wellness Services: <http://campushealth.unc.edu/cws>
- HAVEN: <http://womenscenter.unc.edu/our-work/programs-events/haven-training/>
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Center: <http://lgbtq.unc.edu/>
- Take care of yourself: <http://gradschool.unc.edu/student/guide.html>

### III. Responsibilities of Professors with TAs

You can expect the professor to:

- Upload/make available the syllabus by the first day of class at the latest.
- Give you clear objectives, materials and concepts to be covered in section meetings.
- Give new TAs more guidance than experienced students.
- Generate and create ALL lectures, and images for lectures. TAs are NOT responsible for creating lectures and should not be asked to do so.
- Be attentive to interactions between TAs and use every effort to help resolve tensions.
- Meet weekly with the TAs. Professors should ASK QUESTIONS to make sure sections are going as planned, and to address any issues with students, or any issues among the TAs.
- Take the lead on addressing issues with students, including health issues that involve Student Health Services, absences, and problematic behavior.
- Be clear at the outset on how they want TAs to address small issues with students.
- Collaborate with you in creating exams and rubrics, but not ask you create them yourselves.
- Provide you with grading standards and not re-grade student exams/papers without explaining to you their reasons for doing so. Because changing the terms of the standards undermines the professor's credibility, such explanations will generally be moments for you to learn something pedagogically.
- Establish rules for the TAs at the outset of the semester. There should always be clear rules and expectations to help prevent confusion and misunderstandings.