

**Guidelines for TAs, GPTIs, Graders, and Faculty**  
**Department of Ethnic Studies**  
**University of Colorado Boulder**

*Prefatory Comments*

These guidelines are intended to assist students and faculty with a clear-cut set of expectations so that the Teaching Assistant (TA) experience and Graduate Part Time Instructor (GPTI) experience is an optimal exchange of labor that assists doctoral students in the pragmatics of becoming future faculty. They are also intended to ensure that our faculty's courses run smoothly, while benefitting our students. The ability to serve as a TA is a fundamental aspect of the professionalization of future faculty, and students should see this as an invaluable experience on how to engage with students and assist the faculty in their delivery of the materials and ideas of the course. Although smaller classes are the ideal educational experience, in a state institution, it is necessary to teach large classes. These large classes with TAs have many benefits: our department has more student credit hours (a key metric used by the Arts & Science College in achieving departmental resources, including graduate student funding), training and practice for graduate students' teaching, the ability for our undergraduates to have more assignments, feedback, and success in large courses, and for our undergraduate students to have access to more individuals for their success in our large classes.

In addition, it is great for our undergraduate students to interface with our DES doctoral students, and for faculty to model how to teach large classes, including how to organize a syllabus, design evaluative materials (quizzes, mid-terms, finals, papers, and other activities), structure lecture materials and delivery, address student crises (e.g., death of a family member, a serious mental health issue, etc.), respond to problematic student behavior (e.g., cheating, texting in classes, racist comments, etc.), and so on. This is an invaluable opportunity for our graduate students to receive faculty mentoring and for faculty to mentor students in pedagogic practices that are at the core of our Department. What follows are some general guidelines, duties, and expectations for faculty and students (working as TAs with and without recitation sections), and both graduate and undergraduate graders that assist the instructor of record with grading exams.

**Faculty Best Practices**

Faculty have a unique and crucial opportunity to mentor, train and inspire future faculty. It is important that faculty make time on a regular basis to meet with the doctoral students assigned as TAs to their classes. If a course has recitation sections, faculty should discuss the goals of the sections and what specific topics and areas are important to cover. Please also note that email is the official mode of communication. Communication via text messages should be used sparingly and limited to urgent situations only.

Prior to leaving town, faculty must complete a travel authorization form that specifies why they are out of town and how their classes are being covered, and this must be approved by the Department Chair. For those faculty missing classes who have TAs, they must inform their TAs with how the class is being covered, and the expected role of the TA for the missed lectures. Many faculty use their absences to show films or have guest speakers that they would use even if they

were present. When asking TAs to show a film and/or assist a guest speaker, the instructor should specify how they want the TA to introduce the film or speaker and if any assessments of the film or speaker are expected from the students.

*Re: “Triggers” in Assigned Material*

When using films, it is ideal that a TA will preview the film prior to showing it to the class (when the faculty is absent), particularly if the film includes “triggers” that may be upsetting to students. It is important that the faculty lets the students in the class and the TAs know about the resources available to students to get support if they feel triggered by the readings, lectures, films, and materials of the class. Faculty need to let the TAs know that the material may be triggering, but they should also let the students know before they are absent (in a prior course where they are present). For example, a professor should explain triggers (if they haven’t before) and inform that some of them may be upset by some things that a film or guest speaker presents, and that it is important for them to take care of themselves and leave the class if necessary. The faculty should provide information for the [Office of Victim Assistance](#) in C4C, room 440. Phone 303-492-1377, [assist@colorado.edu](mailto:assist@colorado.edu). (This and other resources are listed at the end of these guidelines.)

Notably, some assigned reading materials can also be triggering and if any of these are assigned while the professor is absent, the students should be forewarned before the professor is absent and the professor should prepare the TAs to address this. Of course, it is not always clear what will trigger anyone, but planning can help alleviate many of the problems that could occur. (And, of course, all of this about triggers is relevant to all classes whether the faculty is present or it is a small class without a TA.)

### **Time Expectations for Teaching Assistants**

Teaching assistants who have a 50% time appointment are expected to work 20 hours per week. Teaching assistants that have a 25% appointment are expected to work 10 hours a week. If there is no grading involved in any given week, TAs may be working less than this. TAs should “bank” hours on lighter weeks so as to handle heavier grading weeks down the road. TAs should keep a record of how many hours worked per week and designate how it was spent (e.g., 2 hours lecture, 2 hours office hours, 2 hours review session for exam, 8 hours grading a quiz, 2 hours recitation, 3.5 hours prep for recitation, and so on).

### **Lecture Expectations for Teaching Assistants**

TAs are expected to attend all lectures and take detailed notes so that they can go over the lecture material in detail during recitation or if students come to their office hours (because they missed a lecture or don’t understand something from lecture). TAs need to take notes even if they know the material so that they can remember what was presented and create an engaging recitation hour. If for some reason TAs must miss a lecture, they need to be sure to let the instructor of record know as soon as possible; and go over the lecture notes with a fellow TA (if there is one) before leading the recitation section with the missed materials. TAs must read all of the required readings before coming to lecture (and, obviously, if the recitation is before the lecture, materials must be read before the recitation).

*TAs in lecture-only courses typically do the following:*

- Assist the professor in gathering, copying, and distributing course materials prior to each class
- Assist with technical & AV and guest speaker support for lectures
- Hold regular office hours to meet with students (2 hours per week and by appointment)
- Assist in preparing and grading course exams & assignments
- Assist with entering grades into Canvas
- Assist in compiling and submitting final grades

Occasionally the instructor of record will ask TAs if they want to give a guest lecture for the class. It is up to student to see if they want to make the time to prepare for a lecture and if asked by the instructor it is must be done with far advanced notice ideally at the beginning of the semester. The instructor of record must mentor students on how to prepare and deliver an engaging lecture. TAs can also be asked to help coordinate discussions in class or help with exam preparations for the class, again with clear consultation with the instructor and with the other TA if there are more than one assigned to the class.

*Expectations for TAs with recitations:*

The instructor of record should provide clear guidance to TAs on the topics and themes of the course and what the faculty expects the TA to address in recitations. TAs should look over the syllabus at the beginning of each week to see the outlines of what needs to be accomplished in recitation. TAs should pick up the necessary materials from the instructor to make appropriate copies for recitations. If the instructor will e-mail or leave materials in the mailbox of TAs, the instructor should notify TAs in advance of recitation so that TAs can make appropriate copies for recitation.

If required to do so by the instructor, TAs create a presentation of lecture concepts or other relevant materials of their own choosing to present at each recitation. Their presentations should reinforce the keywords and concepts from each lecture. Each recitation section should cover the same materials for consistency. Track the attendance and participation of each student for the 'recitation grade' and the instructor should provide specific details on how to track participation.

Use the full 50-minute session each week. Do not cancel or let recitations out early, unless all of the TAs have been given that instruction by the instructor. TAs who must miss a recitation or switch recitations with another TA for any reason, must notify the instructor in advance. TAs and faculty may want to agree before the course starts how the missed recitation will be handled.

### **Grading Expectations**

TAs are typically responsible for the grades of all of their recitation students. Given that CANVAS (and other similar programs) have been known to lose data, be sure to download the excel file from CANVAS on a regular basis and store it on your hard drive or a cloud to avoid the huge problems if this happens.

TAs are responsible for entering grades on CANVAS in a timely fashion and for returning graded assignments in a timely fashion (for items that are returned), as defined by the instructor. Guidelines for grading need to be as consistent as possible across and the instructors should spend time “norming” the grading standards between the instructor and the TA(s) assigned to the class.

### **Professional Standards and Best Practices for TA Performance**

- Prompt and professional responses to the Instructor’s email communication
- Professional email and verbal communication with students
- Professional work ethic and prompt completion of tasks
- Conscientious preparation for class, including doing the readings
- Punctuality in meeting classes and keeping student appointments
- Consistency and academic rigor in grading student assignments
- Teamwork & coordination with the professor and with other TAs
- Sharing ideas/suggestions for improving the course with the professor and other TAs
- Devising ways to link recitation activities with lectures & readings
- Developing interpersonal skills in leading student discussions
- Being candid with students if you don’t know the answer
- Relaying student feedback to the professor
- Being sensitive to individual student concerns and problems
- Returning student assignments and exams promptly

### **Basic Standards of Performance for Graduate Part-Time Instructors**

- Graduate Part-Time Instructors (GPTIs) are responsible for all aspects of their courses. They are responsible for the presentation of course material, the creation, and evaluation of student assignments, and for TA performance if their courses have TAs.
- In some cases, courses taught by GPTIs have established curricula and guidelines regarding content. In others, we understand that GPTIs are generally able, through working with their primary advisor and members of their committee, to design their own course. To have consistency in courses, when appropriate, it is expected that GPTIs look at and likely use much of the material in other approved syllabi, and talk with faculty and others who have taught the course for further insight.
- GPTIs need to be sure to include any required CU policies in their syllabi (which are typically emailed), and it is advised that they may want to include some of the student resources listed at the end of these guidelines (particularly in classes which have triggers).
- In general, GPTIs should be present at all scheduled class times. If attendance is not possible, GPTIs should arrange for substitute instructors to conduct classes in their absence. DES will make available the teaching times for the instructors and TAs in any given semester.
- GPTIs should hold 2 hours of office hours per week for their course. Office hours should take place at all scheduled times unless extraordinary circumstances intervene. In this case, office hours must be rescheduled at convenient alternative times and communicated to the students and TAs in a timely manner.
- We recognize that, as GPTIs and TAs are all graduate students, there are inherent conflicts

in the requirement that the former supervise the latter. Nevertheless, GPTIs are responsible for their courses. If TAs are not performing appropriately, their GPTIs must either act or take responsibility for TA inadequacies upon themselves. If GPTIs are uncomfortable in this role, they are welcome to request assistance from the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

- We monitor GPTI performance in the same manner in which we monitor faculty performance. Our primary instrument for this is FCQ reports and peer reviews that are done by core faculty every semester.

## **Graders**

Graders are hired and are paid at the rate of \$12 per student during the academic year and \$35 per student for online classes in the summer terms. Graders are not TAs or GPTIs or research assistants. Their sole purpose is to assist in grading exams and other evaluative materials in consultation with the instructor of record. Graders are not expected to hold office hours or attend lectures. Graders can be qualified undergraduates that have a strong GPA and have taken the class before or evidence of prior knowledge of the materials of the course. Graders must submit their graded materials to the instructor of record and the instructor of record must approve the grades before they are shared with the students. It is inadvisable to give undergraduate graders access to CANVAS (or similar software), where they will be privy to information about their peers. The course instructor or TA should either enter these grades into Canvas, or provide the grader with an Excel spreadsheet that only has the students' names. The instructor (or course TA) can then add the necessary information to the Excel spreadsheet to upload it into CANVAS.

## **STUDENT RESOURCES**

The [Center for Inclusion & Social Change](#) (CISC) has been established to support undergraduate and graduate students across multiple identities, including students of color, LGBTQ+ students, QTBIPOC students, women and femme students and first-generation students. Students will find a welcoming and inclusive gathering space at the Center for Inclusion and Social Change, and a place to find community, resources and support for academic, personal and professional growth. Location: Center for Community, room N320.

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPs) provides free short-term counseling for students, staff, and faculty, as well as a variety of support groups, consultation, and education. Location: Center for Community, room S440; phone: 303-492-6766.

[Community Health](#) is the public health division of Wardenburg and provides free HIV testing, presentations on sexual health and equity, cold care kits, safer sex supplies, and tobacco quit kits. Location: University Memorial Center, room 411; phone: 303-492-2937.

[Disability Services](#) provides students with disabilities with tools, reasonable accommodations, and support services to participate fully in the academic environment. Location: Center for Community, room N200; phone: 303-492-8671.

The [GLBTQ Resource Center](#) provides education, advocacy, community, and leadership development for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer students. Location: Center for Community, room N450; phone: 303-492-1377.

[International Student and Scholar Services](#) (ISSS) helps answer questions concerning non-U.S. students' legal status or other issues pertinent to their stay at CU. Location: Center for Community, room S355; phone: 303-492-8057.

The [Office of Victim Assistance](#) (OVA) offers free confidential information, support, advocacy, and short-term counseling to students, faculty and staff at CU, including their significant others. OVA is a separate office, not connected to the police department. Our office primarily focuses on situations involving traumatic events, including, but not limited to physical assault and hazing, bias motivated incidents, death, discrimination and harassment including sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, serious accidents, sexual assault, and stalking. We can help people learn about resources and assess their options in these situations. Location: Center for Community, room S440; phone: 303-492-8855; email: [assist@colorado.edu](mailto:assist@colorado.edu).

### **Off-Campus and After-Hours Resources**

The OVA maintains an [after-hours line](#) for student assistance. If you are a CU student, graduate student, faculty, or staff member, or if you would like to discuss concerns about a CU Boulder community member after hours, call their main number (303-492-8855) and press "2" to speak to a mental health professional by phone. In an emergency, of course, call 911. If you're not sure if it's an emergency, call 911 and they'll tell you.