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Collaboration

UCSB

## TA HANDBOOK

*Rev. 6/22/2018*

**UC SANTA BARBARA**

**Department of Political Science**

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# INTRODUCTION

This manual has several goals. One is to outline the responsibilities of teaching assistants and of the faculty members who supervise them. Another is to provide general guidelines and practical suggestions to help TAs become more effective teachers.

These goals cannot be achieved without cooperation and mutual respect between faculty members and TAs. The supervising instructor provides guidance and support, drawing upon his or her experience and expertise. The TA, in more direct and daily contact with the students, keeps the faculty member informed of developments in the sections. A feeling of common effort and an environment free of intimidation, gossip, and destructive competition are essential conditions for effective teaching.



## RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. TA'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISOR

1. Your primary responsibility is to support your supervising instructor and follow all directives as to section leadership and student evaluation.
2. Be respectful of course content and objectives in section - as communicated by your supervising instructor. Remember, your role is to explain and clarify the course material as developed and presented by the course instructor. If appropriate and in consultation with the course instructor, acknowledge the existence of debates or conflicting historical interpretations of material covered in the course. Under no circumstances should you use section discussion to present your own interpretation of course materials, or otherwise to veer off in a direction that takes away from the objectives established by the instructor.
3. Attend all lectures. Pay attention, take notes, and provide any other instructional support the instructor requests. Be mindful that you are modeling behavior to the undergraduate students in the class.

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## TA'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISOR—*continued*

4. Read all assigned readings.
5. Make sure students understand lecture content.
6. Provide respectful and accurate feedback to the course instructor in private conversations or correspondence by expressing views from your experience and especially by relaying students' reactions and concerns.
7. Attend and proctor exams. You must be available to your students and instructional supervisor during exams and for any grading meetings.
8. Follow grading rubrics and grading distributions that you are given by your supervising instructor, provide samples (or indeed sometimes all) of your graded materials for your supervising instructor's inspection when requested, and comply with all grading deadlines. This is one of the best methods faculty members have of working to ensure uniformity of grading across sections, and to assist you in upholding standards of accuracy and fairness in your grading.
9. Provide the course instructor with copies of your section syllabus and all handouts you design for your students before handing them out to students, if the instructor requests to see them.
10. Make sure you have no scheduling conflicts when choosing section times and/or with any lectures, labs, or final examinations. In the event that you do have a legitimate and unavoidable conflict that cannot be handled by rescheduling (e.g., a presentation at a major scholarly conference), you **MUST** notify and seek permission for temporary absence from the instructor as soon as you are aware of the situation, and no less than two weeks prior to the event or required absence. See Article 17 of the UAW/ASE negotiated contract for rules and guidelines for requesting temporary leaves, for guidance. Be prepared to discuss options for covering missed sections or otherwise making up for your excused absence with the instructor before making any arrangements. Failure to follow requirements laid out in the ASE contract and by department policy will result in disciplinary action.



## B. TA'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO STUDENTS

1. Come to section meetings on time and prepared. You should come to class with a plan in mind, having worked out a line of questioning that will enable you to cover the main points and themes of the week's readings and lectures, and developed in consultation with the course instructor and other TAs in your course's work group.
2. In section, give students an opportunity to ask questions and clear up any confusion, since this can be difficult in lecture. If needed, report to your supervising instructor if there is any material with which students appear to be struggling.
3. Learn your students' names--a high-priority task for you. Consider using name cards for each student and yourself. This also allows the students to learn each other's names and can help create a sense of community.

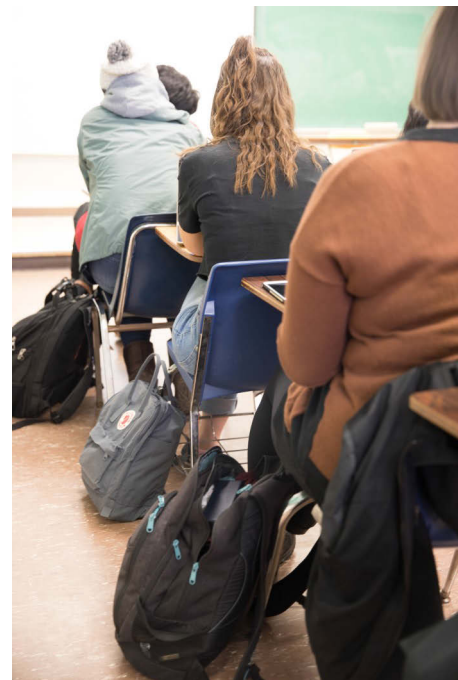
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## B. TA'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO STUDENTS - *continued*

4. Try to identify students who are experiencing difficulty early in the quarter. Keep a watch for signs such as inadequate writing skills, poor study habits, poor preparation, and repeated absences. If appropriate, offer individual assistance during office hours, or recommend campus resources.
5. During your first section, clearly outline expectations, rules, and section grade makeup via a section syllabus. Make sure to approve the section syllabus with your supervising instructor in advance of your first section meeting. The rules and processes for late papers, section absences, grade petitions, and the like should be consistent with the policies applied across all course sections, and established by the course instructor.
6. TAs handle the administrative matters of attendance, and other course management duties as required by their supervising instructor. Please take care in your record keeping, and in the maintenance of sensitive student information. Follow all instructions provided by your supervising instructor in these matters.
7. Maintain an environment conducive to learning. Encourage students to think for themselves. Actively supervise the discussion, but avoid dominating it and be alert to ways to maximize the students' participation. Be gentle and supportive (and always avoid sarcasm and irony) when making corrections in class and on written assignments.
8. Pursue and maintain academic honesty and integrity. Discourage cheating by explaining what constitutes plagiarism and clearly outlining plagiarism policies at the beginning of the quarter. Make it clear that disciplinary action will be taken in the event plagiarism or any other form of cheating does occur, and carefully check your students' work.
9. Be sensitive to students' feelings, especially concerning issues of race, gender, class, age, national origin, sexual orientation, religion or ideology, or political values. Use appropriate gender and racial terms and be specific in your use of language. Be sure to read the campus website on sexual harassment: <https://oeosh.ucsb.edu/sexual.harassment.and.sexual.misconduct/> (See "[Campus, Department and UC Regulations.](#)")
10. Be available to students. TAs must maintain at least three office hours per week and may schedule additional office hours by appointment as necessary. Consider student needs when scheduling office hours (Is 7:00 a.m. reasonable?). Office hours should be conducted without interruption. Be sure to arrange your office hours in coordination with your office mates. Consider holding extended office hours during exam and paper periods. You should also establish a policy for responding to student emails or otherwise communicating with them via GauchoSpace. This will help with time management, and with student expectations regarding responses to queries outside of section and office hours.



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## TA'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO STUDENTS - *continued*

11. Read and grade exams and papers in a timely fashion, following the deadlines and guidelines provided by your supervising instructor. Supply ample feedback through written comments, as feedback is critical to student improvement. If you are a TA in a General Education "Writing Requirement" course, devote extra effort to help your students improve their writing skills.
12. Be aware of campus deadlines and policies for dropping, adding, grade option changes, course withdrawals, incomplete petitions, etc. This will help you advise students more effectively.
13. Work with your supervising instructor and fellow TAs to ensure consistency in grading. Find out early in the quarter what your professor expects for a grade distribution and follow their directives closely. If you have any questions, make sure to ask them in a timely manner.
14. You may be responsible for reporting final course grades for every student on your class list through the eGrades system at the end of the quarter. The eGrades system can be found at <https://egrades.sa.ucsb.edu/login.aspx>

Check with your supervising instructor as to their wishes as to how final grades will be recorded. Make sure that every student in your section appears on your class list, and that you can account for every student on your class list, as TAs are responsible for maintaining section attendance and exam and assignment grades for the students enrolled in their sections.

15. In compliance with both federal law and University of California and UCSB regulations, grades must not be posted in any fashion nor given out over the phone or by **non-campus** email. Students who wish to know their grade before the Registrar officially notifies them must see you in person or make a written request to you. Students will sometimes give you a stamped envelope so you can send their blue books back to them at the end of the quarter.
16. Know where the fire exits are for your classroom.

## C. TA'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THEMSELVES AND THEIR FELLOW TAs



1. TAs and all graduate students must be enrolled in 12 units per quarter. Please consult the Graduate Program Advisor for advice on the best combination of courses for your particular path to degree.
2. Per UAW contract rules, TAs should not spend an average of more than 20 hours per week on TA duties over the quarter. This includes attending lecture, section, office hours, preparing for section, reading, and grading. Do not permit TAing to eclipse your own graduate studies. If you feel that you are spending too much time on teaching, discuss these priorities with your supervising instructor, the Graduate Advisor, Lead TAs, Graduate Program Advisor, or your Faculty Advisor early enough in the quarter that changes can be made.
3. Confer regularly with the other TAs in your course's work group. You are strongly encouraged to arrange to visit each other's sections, to get ideas and to see how the same material might be handled differently.

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## D. TA'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

1. As TAs, part of your success depends on establishing a good working relationship with the office staff. Practice courtesy and consideration in dealing with the office staff. Know your responsibilities as a TA and be informed of office regulations. Be aware of the staff's responsibilities, and try to direct questions and problems to the appropriate person. (For staff duties see [page 18 Resources: Staff § B.](#)) Except in extraordinary circumstances, the office staff will not complete any of your administrative/paperwork obligations, especially in reporting individual grades. (It is imperative that you make sure that every student attending your section is on YOUR grade sheet, not someone else's.) Finally, try not to disturb the office staff outside of the normal hours of operation (M-F 8-12, 1-4).
2. Hand out course evaluations in all your sections during the last week and have a trustworthy student return them in a sealed envelope to the Political Science Peer Advising Office (Ellison Hall #3838) on the third floor. You are not allowed to submit the forms yourself, be in the room when they are filled out, or touch them after they are distributed to your students. Evaluation packets are placed in each TAs Departmental mailbox at the beginning of the ninth week of instruction. After the quarter ends the evaluations are processed by Instructional Computing and computer-generated quantitative summaries of these evaluations, as well as the answers to open-ended questions are provided in digital format to each TA via email, and then become a permanent part of your personnel file in the department. TAs meet with the Undergraduate Program Coordinator after each quarter to discuss their evaluations and best classroom practices.
3. TAs must attend the annual University and Departmental TA orientation meetings, and all new Political Science graduate students must attend the Department's TA training program (POLS 501). This is a department requirement.
4. Post office hours outside your office door for each quarter.

## E. SUPERVISING INSTRUCTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO TAs

1. Meet regularly with all TAs to provide supervision, support and instruction.
2. Help TAs prepare for their section by communicating lecture goals and themes. Suggest discussion questions and themes to be elicited from the readings. Indicate when certain material needs emphasis in sections because it will not be covered in lecture. Give suggestions for dealing with a difficult section.
3. Provide guidance with grading and help to create a uniform standard of grading among the TAs. Often this involves reviewing (or spot-checking) of TA-graded papers and exams. Instructors are responsible for setting grading standards for exams and papers, and making sure the TAs understand them.



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4. Establish clear and uniform policies for make-ups, incompletes, late papers, section absences, grade appeals, and add/drops before the start of the course.
5. Evaluate each TA's performance at the end of the quarter on the standard departmental form. These evaluations will be provided to each TA at the end of the quarter, and a copy inserted into each TAs personnel file. Supervising instructor may visit a TA's section by pre-arrangement in order to provide feedback in the form of concrete suggestions for improvement. A faculty member may also want to review a TA's course evaluations and discuss these with the TA.
6. Establish a policy regarding contested grades. Cooperate and consult with the TA involved when handling a contested grade or a difficult or disruptive student. TAs should inform the supervising instructor of problems.
7. Recognize that being a TA is a half-time job when developing the course requirements. The TAs primary responsibility is to make progress in their coursework and their research. Be realistic about the number of papers, quizzes, and exams the TAs are expected to handle. Make sure expectations are set to comply with the UAW contract requirements for maximum hours per week and for the entire course.

## GENERAL PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION SECTIONS



The principal aim of a discussion section is to provide a forum for students to discuss the ideas and themes of the course, to draw out arguments and evidence from assigned readings, and to follow up on material presented in lecture. Discussion sections allow students to gain knowledge and understanding of course material through conversing with their peers and verbally exchanging ideas and opinions. TAs are essential to this process. While the course instructor determines course content, assigned readings, and the organization of topics to be addressed in lectures and weekly sections, the TA organizes and

guides the general course of the discussion in section, makes sure the most important issues are brought forth, and keeps the discussion from wandering off track. The guidance of the discussion needs to be done with firmness as well as tact. It is the TA's duty to see that the students talk to each other and respond to each other's points with respect.

The section may be used for other purposes such as quizzes, exam preparation, and student questions about lectures or other course material. Students should feel free to call upon the greater knowledge and experience of the TA to clarify matters of fact or interpretation. The section, however, *should not become a lecture session*. A good discussion will let the student, and sometimes even the TA, emerge with new insights and understanding. It is not easy to run an effective discussion section, but when it works, it makes all the effort worthwhile.

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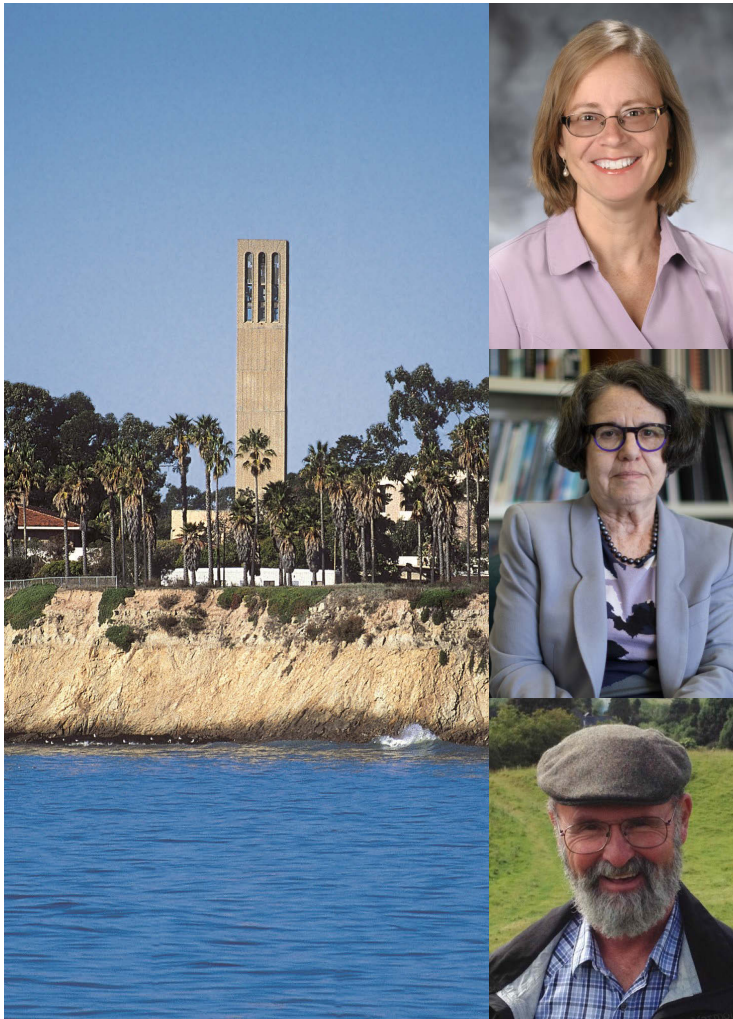


# RESOURCES

## A. POLITICAL SCIENCE FACULTY LEADERSHIP TEAM

This section is designed to give you some introductory information about resources that are available to you. The Political Science Department's staff offices are located in the east wing of the third floor of Ellison Hall.

Faculty primarily responsible for the day-to-day management of the Department's program and staff:



DEPARTMENT CHAIR:  
*Professor Kate Bruhn*

VICE CHAIR AND  
DIRECTOR, UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION:  
*Professor Cynthia Kaplan*

FACULTY GRADUATE ADVISOR AND  
DIRECTOR, GRADUATE EDUCATION:  
*Professor Eric Smith*

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## B. POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT STAFF

The staff will assist graduate students in various ways relevant to their status as students, teaching assistants, and teaching associates. The department as a whole seeks a cordial atmosphere; please respect the staff's primary responsibility to their jobs. The following is a list of the departmental staff and their duties relevant to graduate students.



### GRADUATE PROGRAM ASSISTANT

#### **Carol Conley**

Monday through Friday, 8:00am-12 and 1:00pm-5:00pm

Ellison Hall 3835

Phone: (805) 893-3626

E-mail: [conley@polsci.ucsb.edu](mailto:conley@polsci.ucsb.edu)

Carol is the **Graduate Program Assistant**, the main staff person dealing with currently enrolled graduate students. She handles graduate recruitment and admissions in coordination with the Faculty Graduate Advisor, the reapplication and appointment process for TAships every year, TA fee remissions, and fee fellowships. She is also involved with student career placement and alumni outreach.

**NOTE:** Before being hired as a TA or Teaching Associate, a graduate student must complete the hiring documents required by UCSB before the appointment can be put into the payroll system. Contact Carol Conley, the department's Graduate Program Coordinator, to complete these documents.



### BUSINESS MANAGER

#### **Sharon Terry:**

Monday through Friday, 8:0am-12 and 1:00pm-5:00pm

Ellison Hall 3832

Phone: (805) 893-8476

E-mail: [terry@polsci.ucsb.edu](mailto:terry@polsci.ucsb.edu)

Sharon is the Department's **Business Manager**. Sharon acts as the chief administrative/staff officer for the department. She assigns offices to graduate students and TAs and manages the annual budget for hiring TAs and graduate Teaching Associates. She also prepares and submits appointment packages for graduate students hired to teach a course for the Department as a Teaching Associate.

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## POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT STAFF - *continued*



### FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

**Anh-Thy Nguyen:**

Monday through Friday, 8:00am-12:30pm and 1:00pm-4:30pm  
Ellison 3831

Phone: (805) 893-8061

E-mail: [anh-thy@polsci.ucsb.edu](mailto:anh-thy@polsci.ucsb.edu)

Anh-Thy is the Department's **Financial Assistant** in charge of reimbursements for travel, entertainment, and miscellaneous expenses. The UCSB hiring documents for hourly graduate student employment in the department (assisting a professor with research) are handled by Anh-thy. Signed time sheets for hourly employees should be placed in her mailbox for payment processing. (NOTE: TA and Teaching Associate positions are monthly positions which do not require time sheets in order to be paid.) Graduate students will also work with her if they have fellowships, grants, or awards that are processed through the Department.



### UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

**Dr. Alison Keleher:**

Monday through Friday, 7:30am-12:00pm and 1:00pm-4:30pm  
Ellison Hall 3837

Phone: (805) 893-3433

E-mail: [keleher@polsci.ucsb.edu](mailto:keleher@polsci.ucsb.edu)

Dr. Keleher is the **Undergraduate Program Coordinator**. She is responsible for scheduling all graduate and undergraduate courses for the Department, supervises the undergraduate Peer Advising Office, and assists faculty and TAs with undergraduate advising issues. Working alongside the Faculty Graduate Advisor and Lead TAs, Dr. Keleher trains and coaches new TAs, and meets with TAs each quarter to review and discuss TA section evaluations. As the Department's Mediation Officer, Dr. Keleher is a resource in helping to resolve disputes between undergraduates and TAs and/or instructors, or between graduate students. She also observes Teaching Associates in the classroom as part of the Department's Adjunct Mentoring Program, providing guidance on best practices in the classroom.

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## POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT STAFF—*continued*

Ellison  
3833

### ACADEMIC ASSISTANT

**Academic Assistant:**

Monday through Friday, 8:00am-12:00 and 1:00pm-5:00pm  
Ellison Hall 3833  
Phone: (805) 893-3432  
E-mail:

The **Academic Assistant** for the Political Science Department answers the main telephone line, sorts and delivers the mail, duplicates and scans material for faculty, deals with copier upkeep, inventories supplies, manages course reserves, orders textbooks for faculty and desk copies for TAs, and is the DSP proxy for testing accommodations. Additionally, the assistant keeps the Department calendar for the seminar and conference rooms and generates the list of Faculty and TA offices and office hours each quarter.



### CHAIR'S ANALYST / ASSISTANT

**Sarah Soto:**

Monday through Friday, 8:00am-4:30pm  
Ellison 3829  
Phone: (805) 893-3740  
E-mail: [ssoto@ucsb.edu](mailto:ssoto@ucsb.edu).

Sarah is the **Chair's Analyst/Assistant** and works with the chair and business officer on multiple projects. Her main responsibilities include analytic projects involving data gathering and report preparation as well as Department projects such as: faculty recruitment; event planning; Lane Room equipment and scheduling; website maintenance; and internal and external communication including weekly faculty/staff/graduate student emails; an annual newsletter; promotional and informational flyers; donor/alumni correspondence; and department file maintenance on the Google Drive. In addition, Sarah serves as the back-up when our Business Officer is not available; and as the Department Safety Representative.

## C. OFFICE EQUIPMENT AND MAIL ROOM

There is no support for office equipment between 12-1pm, due to the lunch hour. The HP printer and the Konica copier/scanner are both located in the third floor copy room in 3839.

HP Printer: The HP prints only in black/white and is for your use in preparing materials for sections. Use the computers in 3842 to print directly to the HP printer. Note: If the door is locked see any available staff member on the third floor.

Konica Copier/Scanner: The Konica is for your copying/scanning use. See Administrative Assistant for help if needed.

Mailboxes: TAs are allocated a mailbox each quarter they work for the Department. TA Mailboxes are located on the far side of the refrigerator in the 3rd floor Mail Room. TAs are expected to check their Department mailboxes each day they are on campus, as students, Department staff, and supervising faculty use them to distribute TA work-related material.

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## D. INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

The Department and University provide a variety of resources for Teaching Assistants and Teaching Associates.

1. Instructional Development – <http://oic.id.ucsb.edu/> - Instructional Development is located in Kerr Hall on the first floor. This department directs the campus Teaching Assistant Development Program (TADP). Instructional Development maintains an extensive website for TAs at: <http://oic.id.ucsb.edu/ta-development-program> and this Gauchospace "TA Community" resource site: <https://gauchospace.ucsb.edu/courses/course/view.php?id=4795>

Instructional Development's campus wide activities and responsibilities include:

- TA Orientation Day each Fall Quarter
- Online resources, tips and strategies for teaching: *TA Handbook* and *International TA Handbook*
- TA Taping and Consultation Program
- Pedagogical workshops upon departmental request
- Quarterly teaching skills workshops
- Individual consultations (upon request)
- General support for TAs and faculty on TA issues

UCSB Instructional Consultants, supporting the work of TAs:

- Dr. Lisa Berry, [lisa.berry@id.ucsb.edu](mailto:lisa.berry@id.ucsb.edu), x8395
- Dr. Mindy Colin, [mindy.colin@id.ucsb.edu](mailto:mindy.colin@id.ucsb.edu), x2828

2. The *Political Science Teaching & Learning Toolbox* Gauchospace page, which is available to all Department graduate students and faculty, contains a number of teaching and learning resources. See: <https://gauchospace.ucsb.edu/courses/course/view.php?id=14896>
3. Your supervising instructor, your academic advisor, and/or Dr. Keleher are all good resources when you have questions on best practices in the classroom.

## E. CAMPUS LEARNING ASSISTANCE SERVICES (CLAS) – [WWW.CLAS.UCSB.EDU](http://WWW.CLAS.UCSB.EDU)

It is not always possible to provide students with the help they need, either because of time constraints or your own lack of training in dealing with particularly difficult educational problems. You can refer students with serious skills problems to CLAS. This program offers general study skills workshops, applied workshops tailored to particular class requirements, and individualized writing instruction. The general workshops cover skills such as exam preparation, time management, note-taking, memory and concentration, textbook reading, problem-solving strategies, textbook un-

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## E. CAMPUS LEARNING ASSISTANCE SERVICES (CLAS) - *continued*

derlining, effective speaking, rapid reading, and critical reading. The writing lab offers assistance at all stages of composition, from planning to revision. CLAS services are free and available to all registered UCSB students. Each quarter CLAS publishes a schedule for the workshops. Students need to sign up for appointments at the writing lab and the general workshops in advance.

Undergraduate students should be reminded that whenever they talk to someone else (CLAS, another TA, etc.) about a writing assignment, that they should double-check the other person's advice with you. You will grade the assignment, after all. CLAS offers forms to staple to the back of essays that state the student attended CLAS and who they worked with. You can request that your students supply you with these forms if they attend CLAS.

## F. FELLOW TAs

Perhaps one of the best resources available to any TA, new or continuing, can be an experienced TA who can offer suggestions on planning sections, dealing with problem students, grading, adding and dropping students from sections, and almost any other question that arises when you are TAing. And if they don't know something, they can usually tell you who might. Visiting another TA's section is an excellent way to see your own classes in a new perspective; be sure to secure advance permission to visit. Since there is no "perfect" way to teach, talk to several TAs to see how they would approach the problem you are facing.

## G. LEAD TA

The Department appoints a Lead TA (or two) each academic year who is available for consultation throughout the year. You may go to them for assistance and consultation, but it is important to understand the limitations of their responsibilities and duties.

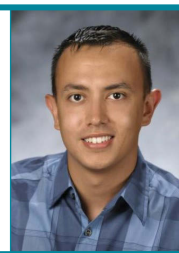
### **Lead TA Responsibilities:**

- Organize/lead new TA orientation and training event prior to beginning of fall term (late Sept)
- Communicate Departmental TA policies
- Be available to meet and advise other TAs

### **Although not an exhaustive list, Lead TA's are not responsible for:**

- *Establishing* Department policy on TA responsibilities
- *Enforcing* Department TA policies and responsibilities
- Disciplining graduate student colleagues who fail to adhere to TA policies
- Acting as liaisons between Department administration and TA union representatives

2018-2019 LEAD TA  
Daniel Gomez  
dgomez00@umail.ucsb.edu



## H. Gaucho Space

Gauchospace is an online learning system that can be found at <http://gauchospace.ucsb.edu>. Some professors in the department may choose to use Gauchospace to post lecture slides, study guides, and other course information. Quizzes, exams, and papers can also be found on Gauchospace. Gauchospace's Peachmail system can also be used to email enrolled students *en masse*.

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# PRACTICAL TIPS

The following suggestions come from experienced TAs, and previous departmental TA manuals. These tips are not fixed rules, but they can help you deal with issues that all TAs face. They may alert you to potential problems, as well as provide you with possible solutions.

## A. FIRST SECTIONS

1. Encourage everyone to say something in the first section. If students get used to talking from the very beginning, they will usually continue to do so. You might ask them to share a bit about themselves, e.g., where they grew up, what hobbies they enjoy, etc.
2. Since most people are uncomfortable speaking in front of strangers, try to create a common bond among the students in the first section. One method is to have several small groups work out the answers to questions (a non-threatening quiz, or a textual analysis of a short passage from a primary source), and then discuss their findings with the rest of the class.
3. Establish your policies and grading in the first class. Clarify how participation will influence grades, and do this early and clearly. Explain how you define participation, and consider offering alternative assignments to students who are uncomfortable speaking up in class, such as having them talk to you privately in your office. Also remind students that they must get a C, not a C-, if they are taking the class pass/no pass. It is against University policy for them to tell you what their grading option is. [Also that for POLS majors that no POLS class can be taken P/NP and count toward their POLS degree requirements.]
4. Inform students that they *will not* be graded/evaluated on their politics, and that no exam or essay question will involve that kind of evaluation – rather, that they *will be* graded/evaluated on the quality of their analysis of political concepts and theories. Letting students know that their politics will not be judged should help students feel more comfortable participating in class and section, and reminding students about this important rule of academic integrity prior to exams and paper deadlines may further alleviate student concerns about instructor and/or TA political bias.
5. Grade rosters are available from your eGrades account, you can log in using your UCSB log in.



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## B. PROMOTING DISCUSSION

1. Consider writing a brief agenda for the day's section on the board so that students have a sense of your plan for the section.
2. Before initiating discussion of a topic, stimulate student recall of the material. Ask someone to summarize the topics covered in lecture that week. Alternatively, provide a brief summary of material covered last week. Or, simply ask, "Did you like the reading?"
3. Make a plan for your sections, in consultation with your supervising instructor and the other TAs (if any) in your course's workgroup. Within the parameters suggested by your instructor, consider sections your pedagogical lab, and experiment with different methods to engage your students while illustrating material and clarifying concepts.



4. Students will often come to section unprepared, and expect you to lecture, or re-lecture material they haven't read or heard in the course lectures. This expectation can make section participation by students sparse. Having a plan to engage the students can help with this problem, since simply asking if they have read the material, or factual questions about the material may result in unproductive student silence. Remember, these are discussion sections and not lectures.
5. If you want students to talk, consider the environment. Students may engage in a discussion, as opposed to a question-and-answer session if they can make eye contact with each other. Arranging the desks in a semi-circle is one method of furthering discussion. (Some TAs prefer to sit in this circle, but if you use the blackboard a lot, you may prefer to stand.)
6. Start with questions that are basic (factual rather than analytical) and easy, ones that everyone can answer, to maximize participation at the outset. Gradually increase the difficulty level of the questions to ones which ask the student to analyze and synthesize information from the readings and lectures.
7. Think of classroom silence as productive. After all, students deserve a chance to think before they answer. Be patient if nobody comes up with an answer instantly.
8. When a class appears reticent to discuss a topic, consider breaking it into small groups briefly and reconvening it for reports, or consider allowing a student to lead the discussion.
9. Small groups or debates can be particularly effective if arranged the previous week: divide the class, and tell each group what material it's responsible for. You can also set up debates a week ahead, where students have to both defend their side's position and defend it from the other side's "attack."
10. Try assigning students to write a paragraph each week in preparation for class about some selected portion of the assigned reading. Have them turn the paragraphs in at the beginning of

*more...*

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## B. PROMOTING DISCUSSION—*continued*

class. Assign groups of students different portions, thus ensuring that each student will be knowledgeable about at least some part of the assignment.

11. Try to get students to speak to the entire class, not just to you.
12. Ask students to support their opinions and to give examples. This helps make complex material easier to understand, and it reminds students that they need to be able to support their ideas with evidence. Try to get your students in the habit of citing their sources.
13. Vary the types of questions you use. Use fill-in-the-blank questions for warm-up exercises, or whenever you sense a sudden pocket of common ignorance in the class. Open-ended questions permit students to elaborate and think through their answer rather than just give a brief response. If students cannot respond to your first question, rephrase it. Your follow-up question can help the students to focus on previous material that might be relevant, or to draw their attention to some limitation or inconsistency in a previous response.
14. Develop a game plan for silent students. Some can be emboldened to participate if you stress that you understand that everyone worries about appearing foolish or ignorant, and it is okay to say things that are not 100% accurate. (Sometimes wrong ideas can promote a very lively discussion.) Assure them that you want them to speak up when they don't understand something, for it is very likely that quite a few people don't understand it also.
15. Encourage and recognize students' contributions. Be alert to nonverbal cues signaled by students who do not participate often, and give them the floor. Be sure to recognize and praise particularly insightful or provocative remarks.
16. One way to increase student participation and encourage good class preparation is to have the students prepare questions as if they were the TA for the next section. Remind them that their questions should be ones that bring out the important themes and ideas in the readings, as well as questions that help tie the readings and lectures together. The following week break them into small groups (for perhaps five minutes) so that each group can choose three or four questions to ask the rest of the section. Then have each group in turn ask a question, until they have run out of questions.
17. You may want to give weekly homework assignments where the students write a brief essay (from one paragraph to one page in length), discussion questions, or a thesis statement answering a particular question. Weekly homework can provide a starting point for discussions in section. Such assignments also allow students to see what you are looking for, and where their writing needs work.
18. Provide a summary or conclusion at the end of each class. By summarizing the main points discussed, you provide the students with a sense of closure and help them remember. You can also accomplish this by having students contribute their conclusions.



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## C. ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

1. It is important to keep weekly records of student participation, since your recollection of student activity in the earlier part of the quarter tends to be hazy if you have not provided yourself with notes. There are several ways of keeping these records. One is to write up your observations on the students right after class, and then use these notes when you determine the section grade. Another is to use a scale of 0 to 3, [where 0= no show, 1=C, 2=B, 3=A] to rate student performance every week. The important thing is to be consistent in your method and have a record of how you are grading students. Make sure to keep an online version of your grades as well as print versions, in case your hard copies get lost.
2. Under normal circumstances, you cannot release a student's grades or even discuss a student's grades with their parents, other students, tutors, and other outside individuals without prior written consent given from the student. See FERPA guidelines and training at <http://registrar.sa.ucsb.edu/CMSMedia/Documents/AcademicServices/FERPA%20Training%20One-Page%20for%20Fac-TAs%20FINAL%207-2016.pdf>
3. In courses with more than one TA, your instructional supervisor may appoint a "senior" or "lead" TA. The graduate student so designated will have either worked previously as a TA for that particular course, or possibly had a great deal of prior experience working for our department. The senior or lead TA appointment allows for greater coordination of multi-TA work groups, and smoother communication between instructor and teaching assistants. Additionally, senior or lead TAs are a good source of institutional wisdom about department policies and best practices.



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## D. GRADING

### 1. EXAMS AND PAPERS

- a. It is imperative that you grade exams and papers anonymously. Please speak with your supervising instructor as to how they would like you to protect this anonymity as you grade. There are various appropriate best practices.
- b. Here are some tips that may help you when it's time to grade papers or exams. **It is imperative that you consult with your supervising instructor, and follow all of their directives as to process, grade distributions, type of and degree of feedback required.**
- c. Quickly read about ten or so blue books or papers to get an overall sense of the range of student response. It is useful to make initial comments in pencil, and then go over them in ink. What we expect and what we get are often radically different. Definitely write your initial grades in pencil.
- d. Before grading exams, go through your lecture notes and section plans and create a sheet which lists information and examples that the students could reasonably be expected to have at their disposal to answer questions. Check to see if your instructor has model answers or a rubric they wish you to use.
- e. When the students have a choice of questions on which to write for either exams or papers, read all of one question at the same time. Then read the next set. [Consult with your supervising instructor to ensure this is how they would like this done.]
- f. On first reading exams, stack broad categories first (A, B, C, D, F). Then return to the piles for more refined judgments, making sure all of the same grade are on a par, and adding plus and minus signs. Expect to move individual exams from pile to pile on re-reading them. Put the final grade on in ink only at the end of the process.
- g. Make marginal comments pointing out factual errors, vagueness, awkwardness, or the need for evidence. Always avoid sarcasm, put downs, or insulting remarks. At the end of the essay, summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the exam, so the student will know how to improve. Use ink, not pencil, when marking **final grades**.
- h. Try to provide students with substantial written comments on midterms and papers. Compose a paragraph of commentary, balancing positive and negative comments. Do not be concerned with merely justifying your grade by pointing out what was wrong, but do not overdo praise either. This allows students to learn from their mistakes, and get a better sense of what they were graded on.



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## D. GRADING—EXAMS AND PAPERS - *continued*



i. For papers, be especially vigilant in marking grammatical errors, vague language, or awkward phrasing. Instructional Development recommends that you only need to do this for the first page or two, noting at the end of the paper that these errors appeared consistently throughout the paper – rather than marking all the errors throughout the paper. This method reduces your grading time, and also doesn't discourage student learnpapers that will be useful in the event that the student needs a letter of reference from the instructor in later years. [Department policy requires you to keep exams and papers for one quarter. Please see Department Staff if you will be leaving campus, or have questions about this.]

j. Consider composing your comments on a computer. Comments then may be edited, refined, and reconsidered. Print out these comments and clip them to the exams or papers. You then also have a permanent record of comments you have made for each student.

k. Please follow all directives of your supervising instructor regarding the return of midterms and papers, and on how they'd like you to resolve grading disputes. Generally, in the absence of a directive from your supervisor, it is best to hand back exams and assignments at the

end of section so that students don't spend the class hour brooding about their grade. Encourage students who have questions about the exam to see you in office hours. Ask students to wait at least 24 hours to discuss grades. Should a student wish to challenge a grade, consult with your supervising instructor on what their class policy is before proceeding. In the absence of a policy, you might ask a student to write an explanation of why they think their work should be reevaluated. Express your willingness to explain what was required in the exam or paper and to help them improve their work. Encourage or require all students who receive a C- or lower on any assignment to meet with you to discuss their grade.

- l. Check with your supervising instructor as to their wishes to post assignment and exam grades ing. Writing requirement courses are supposed to teach students how to write; this will not happen if their mistakes are not pointed out to them.
- m. Many TAs write fewer comments on final exams because most students do not return the next quarter to pick up their exams. But you should jot down abbreviated comments to remind yourself of how you evaluated the exam. You can volunteer to write more extensive comments for those who do come by to ask for their exam.
- n. Inform your students of the importance of picking up exams and papers, both so students will learn from reading the comments and so that they will accumulate a file of exams and on GauchoSpace. All final grades are recorded online in eGrades. Do not input any grade information on eGrades prior to the final grades.

### 2. COMPLAINTS:

- a. When a student is not satisfied with a grade, please make sure that you are following your supervising instructor's policy on grade challenges. Then, recheck your own evaluation. It is best to not reread the exam while the student is waiting for you because it is too easy to feel pressured in that situation. After you have discussed the work more...

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## D. GRADING - COMPLAINTS - *continued*

and its shortcomings together, if the student is still unhappy consult your supervising instructor for further guidance and instructions. In some cases he or she may wish to see the exam, or ask you to show it to another TA for his or her opinion; the next stage is for the student to see the faculty member. Students should understand that reevaluation can lead to the lowering of a grade as well as raising it (unless the faculty member has announced otherwise).

- b. Recognize that you can make mistakes and be willing to reconsider a grade, but be sure that you stick to the standards your supervising instructor has established for the exam or assignment. Ask yourself, when you change a person's grade, if you are being fair to the other students. University policy in this area generally only allows grade changes when it is clear that student work was overlooked, or not properly credited in the original submission. It is not acceptable to give a grade based on work submitted subsequent to or in addition to the primary submission, nor to change a grade simply because a student needs or wants a particular grade.



## E. REVIEW SESSIONS

1. Review sessions are not required by the department, but some professors may recommend that you hold one for your students. If you feel that a review session might be helpful for your students make sure to check with your instructor before offering one.
2. Review sessions are more successful if you require student participation, rather than lecturing on "what is important." Orient the session to a discussion of prospective exam questions. Have the students brainstorm possible essay questions and IDs, and then choose a few and have them come up with the "answers." If the answer is incomplete or off-base, step in and steer students toward the correct answer. TAs have a responsibility to their colleagues and students not to disclose the contents of exams unless the faculty member and all TAs have agreed to do so.
3. If you receive approval to hold an extra session, and need a room for that session, remember that you need to request a room from Dr. Keleher at least ten days beforehand.

## F. MAKE-UP EXAMS

Supervising instructors in our Department have the *sole* authority to determine whether a make-up exam or submission deadline can be extended. Please consult with your supervising instructor if a student approaches you to request a make-up exam or deadline extension, and then follow their instructions closely. Depending on the decision made on any case, you or the faculty member may need to schedule a room with the Academic Assistant for a make-up exam. (TAs do not proctor exams for students registered with the Disabled Students Program who have a learning disability. These students will need to submit a request for an out-of-classroom testing site. The DSP will arrange for proctors to pick up exams from the Academic Assistant in the POLS Department, administer the exam, and return them to the Academic Assistant once they are completed.)

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## G. OFFICE HOURS & ALTERNATIVE CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENTS



1. If you need to schedule appointments outside of your regularly scheduled office hours, be aware that if your appointment conflicts with an office mate's regularly scheduled hours, your office mate has first call on the office.
2. If you are giving an exam or quiz in your office, you should post a sign on the door so that your office mates don't interrupt.
3. Keep all meetings with students academic and professional. Use care when choosing the time and place for student appointments.
4. Be aware: some students do not feel comfortable meeting TAs outside their office.

## H. MISCELLANEOUS

1. Most TAs find it very useful to hand out weekly study questions to help the students identify important ideas in their reading assignments. This requires reading a week ahead in the textbook or course reader. *Always check with your supervising instructor before providing any such material to your students.*
2. Read student evaluations at the end of the quarter closely and apply what you learn; most students are honest and observant. You will have an opportunity to discuss your evaluations at the end of each quarter with the Undergraduate Program Coordinator, who will give you guidance on how best to interpret your evaluations, and suggestions on improving your pedagogy and class room technique.
3. If you have one or two students who dominate the section, solicit responses from "non-talkers." Be alert to nonverbal cues indicating that they have something to say and call on them: "Did you want to say something...?" or "Let's hear from some of you who haven't said anything yet." Do not call on the "talkers" first. Wait to see if someone else raises a hand or volunteers a comment.
4. Check yourself for annoying mannerisms or habits that might distract students: constant fiddling with pencils, chalk, your glasses, your hair; gum chewing; teetering in your chair precariously, etc. Students do mention these things on course evaluations as major distractions.
5. Do dress appropriately for attending lecture, section, and office hours.
  - a. Your wardrobe may influence how students respond to you in section. When in doubt, dress business casual if possible.
  - b. Respond to student email in a timely fashion. The general Department expectation that TAs will respond to student communications within 24 hours of receipt, excepting weekends and holidays.
  - c. It is always a good practice to create professional and respectful boundaries in your sections. Unless you receive approval from your supervising instructor, the Department discourages TAs from providing meals, for instance, to their students, or engaging in any other types of behavior which might lead students to misinterpret the nature of the section experience.

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## I. ADD/DROP PROCEDURES

1. Be sure to have students officially add your section if they are switching sections **between** TAs. This will ensure that they will receive their grade at the end of the quarter and not get lost in the shuffle. You should assign F grades to *all phantom students* who appear on your final grade list. Please note that some students who don't appear on your list may be Extension students. Their grades go through the Extension Office (not the Registrar) and have an earlier date.
2. To switch a student between sections, TAs should email Dr. Keleher with the PERM number of the student and the enrollment codes of the section the student is currently in and the enrollment code of the section the student is switching into. This should only be done if both TAs are aware of and have approved the switch.
3. In accordance with departmental policy, each supervising faculty member administers the add/drop process, which includes if priority is given based on seniority or major. Consult closely with the faculty member to maintain accurate section lists and to aim for uniformity in section sizes.
4. GOLD has a waitlist option. It is up to the faculty member to decide whether to activate the online waitlist or whether to have TAs manually add students. Make sure to consult the faculty member to find out which option they are using.



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# CAMPUS, DEPARTMENTS, AND UC REGULATIONS

## A. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Be aware of the [campus policy on sexual harassment](#). Recognize that as a TA you are in a powerful position over your students and that behavior which might be acceptable in another context can be coercive given this unequal power relationship. The preamble to this policy is:

*The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Every member of the community should be aware that the University prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that such behavior violates both law and University policy. The University will respond promptly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will take appropriate action to prevent, to correct, and when necessary, to discipline behavior that violates this policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence.*

Dating students is strongly discouraged and may lead to disciplinary action. Even a voluntary and welcome relationship with a student in your class may constitute sexual harassment. Be aware that students who are not currently in your class may be in the future. A romantic relationship with a student over whom you have direct grading authority may have negative consequences that you cannot foresee. Other students may file a claim if they believe they are put at a disadvantage when they hear that a fellow student is dating their teaching assistant.

Copies of the UCSB policies and procedures regarding sexual harassment are available from Ariana C. Alvarez, Director, Equal Opportunity & Discrimination Prevention, who can be reached 3211 Phelps Hall or [ariana.alvarez@ucsb.edu](mailto:ariana.alvarez@ucsb.edu) or at 893-2546. See also <https://oeosh.ucsb.edu/>.

## B. CHEATING

The department and the campus are quite serious about enforcement of the policies regarding cheating. The penalties range from failure in the course to suspension from the university to expulsion. TAs should notify the faculty member regarding all incidents of cheating. All cases should be reported by the faculty member to the [Office of Judicial Affairs](#) so that the student's name will be on file for future reference.

All members of the academic community share responsibility for the academic integrity of students at UCSB. Academic dishonesty is an assault upon the basic integrity and meaning of a University. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the University's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience as well as the value of one's degree. This is true for offenders as well as the entire community. It is expected that all UCSB students will support the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be responsible for the integrity of their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts unless otherwise permitted by an instructor. It is also the responsibility of each student to know the campus rules regarding academic misconduct—  
ignorance is not an excuse. (Office of Judicial Affairs) more...

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## B. CHEATING - *continued*

The best policy is to prevent cheating from occurring. Warn students about the harsh penalties in your TA syllabus. All TAs MUST be present at all exam sessions. Proctor carefully. If possible, during large lecture-hall exams have students sit in areas corresponding to their sections, so that you can monitor and recognize your own students. Students should hand their exams directly to their TA. Compose exams and paper assignments that make cheating difficult. Do not repeat questions or paper topics from term to term and year to year. Do not exactly repeat assignments given by other TAs. The Office of Judicial Affairs has resources available to assist TAs, faculty, and students to prevent cheating. See "[Academic Integrity at UCSB-A Student's Guide](#)" and "[Avoiding Plagiarism: Mastering the Art of Scholarship.](#)" <http://judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/FacultyResources.aspx>

## C. RECORD-KEEPING

TAs should keep accurate records of student grades that can be easily given to supervising faculty if requested, such as an Excel spreadsheet. However, all final grades are submitted through eGrades online.

Keep all exam bluebooks and/or papers for one year, and then throw them away. You should detach the cover from each bluebook or paper before discarding it. If you will not be TAing in the subsequent quarter, or are leaving campus, contact the Department Staff for information on storage of the exams and/or papers.

## D. OFFICES

TA office keys are obtained from Sharon Terry. Most offices will house two or three TAs. Due to the scarcity of TA office space, offices will be allocated to Political Science Department TAs first and then, if space is available, the department will try to accommodate Political Science graduate students who are TAs in other departments.

Courtesy towards your office mates is a must in the limited space. Be sure to arrange your office hours so that they don't overlap, since there is not enough space to hold two or three office hours at once. Ideally, your office mates should not be in the office during your office hours, and vice versa, but this is something for all TAs in the office to discuss and agree upon. Be aware that your private conversations with office mates can often be overheard by students waiting in the halls to see other instructors.

## E. DRESS CODE

There is no dress code in the department for TAs or faculty members. The expectation is that you will dress decently and appropriately.

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## F. DISCRIMINATION

It is [UC policy](#) to prohibit discrimination based on sex, race, age, national origin, or religion. Be aware of your language and your deeds, as well as different cultural norms.

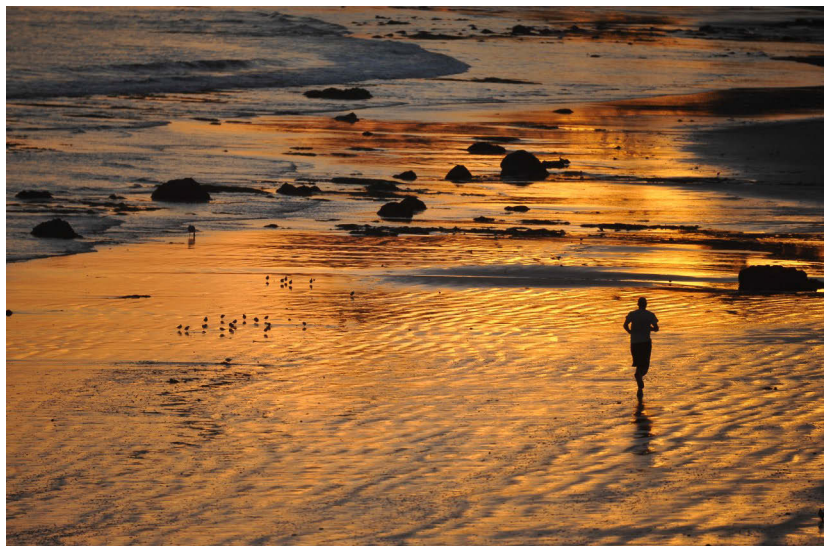
Consider your students' feelings. What is sexist language? What is sexual harassment? What constitutes insensitivity to students' feelings about age, religion, race or gender? Are you unconsciously patronizing or penalizing some students by holding them to a different standard of performance? Make sure that you are not favoring certain students based on any of these categories, and that you call on students evenly. See this link for resources <https://oeosh.ucsb.edu/eodp/policies/>

## G. LEARNING DISABILITIES/DISABLED STUDENTS - <HTTP://DSP.SA.UCSB.EDU/>

Disabled students may require alternative modes of examination or assignments. Be aware that there is a department on campus that helps students with learning disabilities and those who are either temporarily or permanently disabled. Students may need to take exams orally, or be provided with more time to take the exam, or have another person act as a scribe for them during exams. The staff at the [Disabled Student Program](#) either evaluate students themselves or require documentation of a long-standing problem, so be sensitive to the students' needs.

Students must alert you to the fact that they have a learning disability, and they will inform you of the strategies that they have developed with the Disabled Students Program to handle the disability. It is the student's responsibility to inform you of his or her needs before a scheduled examination. You are required to honor these requests upon written official notification. You may want to include a brief notice in your syllabus that students with disabilities should contact you during your office hours. Students must have written notification from DSP in order to receive accommodations. It is not your job as a TA to examine and judge these matters, but to work with the DSP office and student. Students who have accommodations to take exams outside of class will do so with DSP who will collect copies of the exam from the professor. TAs will be notified via email when the exam is ready to pick up from the Academic Assistant in the POLS Department.

If the student does not bring you an official notification of a learning disability from the [Disabled Student Program](#), encourage him or her to do so. The program, located in SRB 2120, can be reached by phone at (805) 893-2668 (V/TDD).



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## H. EMPLOYEE CORRECTIVE ACTION/DISCIPLINE PROCESS

Teaching assistants, while considered apprentice scholar-teachers, are still University employees, and as such are covered by university employment policies, as well as a collective bargaining agreement with the UAW union. When a TA engages in behavior contrary to Department and/or university policies, and the behavior is brought to the attention of either their supervising instructor or the Department's faculty leadership team, the TA can expect to receive a request for a meeting with their supervising instructor to discuss the behavioral issue or problem. At this meeting the TA will be allowed to explain the situation, and if necessary, encouraged to correct or improve their behavior in accordance with university and/or Department policy. In cases where the issue remains unresolved, or additional instances of performance-related behavioral instances occur, the TA may face further corrective and/or disciplinary action by the Department. These Departmental responses can include letters of concern and/or warning placed in a TA's personnel file, removal from TA duties, or in extreme cases, dismissal from Department employment entirely and loss of future TA appointments.

For questions on the Corrective Action/Discipline process, please contact the Graduate Advisor, Dr. Smith, or the Undergraduate Program Coordinator, Dr. Keleher.

For information on the collective bargaining agreement, please see:  
<http://www.hr.ucsb.edu/labor-relations/welcome>



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