

Guidelines for Teaching Fellows and Faculty Members The Graduate Department of Religion

Updated: May 2006

1. The Graduate Department of Religion requires all teaching fellows to participate in the **Teaching of Religion** workshops held by the GDR at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters. First-time teaching fellows are required to attend the **Teaching Assistant Orientation** program offered by The Center for Teaching near the beginning of the Fall semester.
2. The principal instructor of a course has final responsibility for the syllabus and textbooks, the conduct of the course, follow-up on apparent violations of the Honor Code, examination questions, and the final grade.
3. It is expected that the instructor will meet regularly with the TF or TFs (if possible once a week) for planning, coordination, to discuss questions that may have arisen, or to develop a response to new situations.
4. The instructor is responsible for making course expectations clear to students, establishing criteria for grading and supervising the grading process. TFs are often concerned about comparability when several TFs are involved, and the grading process can be an important learning experience. There are several ways in which these concerns can be met. The faculty member may review all the papers and assign the grade; the faculty member and the TFs may read all the papers and review each other's grades; or the instructor may read a sampling of papers, or those about which TFs have had questions.
5. TFs often have closer rapport with students in the course, being (in most cases) closer in age and not representing authority in quite so direct a way. At the same time, both the TFs and the instructor should be aware of potential problems. Students might "go around" a TF to the instructor, or criticize the instructor to a TA, or criticize one TF to another. It is important to learn cooperation with peers and avoid "triangulation." Problems should be dealt with together, with full and open communication; if there are unresolved differences in judgment, the instructor bears the responsibility for the final decision.

6. TFs look forward to the opportunity to lecture. On the other hand, they may feel overburdened if they are called on too frequently. One or two lectures seem to be the usual expectation. All students are urged to have the Center for Teaching videotape at least one of their lectures and review it confidentially with them.
7. While the total amount of time will vary, TFs should expect to spend about ten to fifteen hours a week carrying out all their responsibilities.
8. TFs may want to take the initiative in holding “study clinics” on difficult topics, or review sessions prior to exams (they should inform the principal instructor about their activities and ask for suggestions). Often the students will feel more comfortable with TFs than with the principal instructor or be better able to express questions or (as sometimes happens) criticisms.
9. Dress can be important, both to students and to TFs. The general advice is to dress “maturely” or “professionally” to set a tone of mutual respect.
10. It is important for faculty members as well as TFs to “trade notes” about better and worse experiences in courses employing TFs.
11. It is important for TFs to receive feedback about their work—during the semester, through the course evaluation forms, and in a general way after all these other modes of feedback have been processed.
12. Because of the premium placed on teaching experience by potential employers, faculty members are encouraged to keep notes about TFs’ activities so that they will be able to write job recommendations with specific information.