

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

Updated: August 2016

1. Each PhD student is required to serve three semesters as a teaching associate. This service is a requirement for any student who receives a financial award, including stipend, from the GDR.
2. The GDR office assigns teaching associates each semester. Faculty members should not assign students to TA their courses without the approval of the GDR office.
3. Assignments cannot be guaranteed until the tenth-day enrollment figures are in hand. The general policy stipulates that one teaching associate is allowed for every 25 Divinity students in a Divinity School class or for every 25 undergraduate students in a Religious Studies class. However, if a Divinity School course with an enrollment of 25 or more includes ten or more undergraduates, the College pays for a teaching associate. Likewise, if Religious Studies course with an enrollment of 25 or more includes ten or more Divinity students, the Divinity School pays for a teaching associate. Teaching associates are not allowed to grade the work of other graduate students.
4. The Graduate Department of Religion requires all teaching associates to participate in the **Teaching of Religion** workshops as scheduled by the GDR. 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.
5. Teaching Associates are expected to attend any sessions led by the Master Teaching Fellow. In addition, TAs should call on the MTF for advice when needed.
6. 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.

7. It is expected that the instructor will meet regularly with the TAs (if possible once a week) for planning, coordination, to discuss questions that may have arisen, or to develop a response to new situations.
8. The instructor is responsible for making course expectations clear to students, establishing criteria for grading and supervising the grading process. TAs are often concerned about comparability when several TAs 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 TAs may read all the papers and review each other's grades; or the instructor may read a sampling of papers, or those about which TAs have had questions.
9. TAs 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 TAs and the instructor should be aware of potential problems. Students might "go around" a TA to the instructor, or criticize the instructor to a TA, or criticize one TA 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.
10. TAs often 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 record at least one of their lectures and review it confidentially with them.
11. While the total amount of time will vary, TAs should expect to spend about ten to fifteen hours a week carrying out all their responsibilities.
12. TAs 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 TAs than with the principal instructor or be better able to express questions or (as sometimes happens) criticisms.
13. It is important for faculty members as well as TAs to "trade notes" about better and worse experiences in courses employing TAs.
14. It is important for TAs 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.
15. Because of the premium placed on teaching experience by potential employers, faculty members are encouraged to keep notes about TAs' activities so that they will be able to write job recommendations with specific information.