

UCSB Art Department TA Training/Orientation

TA HANDBOOK

... and resource guide

To Support
Engage
and Inspire

2015-2016

UCSB Art Department TA Training/Orientation
Pilot Program

TA HANDBOOK
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Section I: Introduction to TA Assignments

TA Assignments:

Expectations for TAships vary based on class requirements and instructor preferences. In general, there are three basic types of TAships:

Section Leader: This type of TA is responsible for running discussion/studio sections that support larger main lectures. Typical Section Leader responsibilities include conducting section activities to reinforce course material, explaining assignments, evaluating student work and leading discussion groups. Most section leaders are also responsible for assigning, collecting, recording and reporting grades for all student work. Section leaders also frequently present information to support lectures, make slide presentations and conduct review sessions. Certain courses require grading of academic papers and working with students on writing skills.

Studio Assistant: This type of TA assists the instructor in a studio course. Typical responsibilities are to help with technique demonstrations, provide one-on-one feedback and assistance to students, participate in studio critique sessions and maintain workshop facilities/equipment/supplies.

Reader: This is NOT a TAship. Reader normally reads and grades written assignments for an instructor. Reader's duties are established on a case by case basis, and may include managing attendance and interaction with visiting speakers.

Your instructor will provide you with additional details regarding responsibilities and requirements for your assignment.

Teaching Assistant/Instructor Relations:

TAs complement the activities of the course instructor. Most training and supervision of TAs is through faculty mentorship by the course instructor. Be prepared to take direction from the teacher. It is important that TAs work closely with the instructor in order to meet the requirements of their assignment.

Prior to the beginning of the quarter, your faculty mentor should:

- Provide you with a copy of the course syllabus including course objectives
- Provide you with the course reader and required textbooks
- Meet with you to communicate expectations and answer your questions
- Provide a job description for your assignment
- Offer advice on starting your assignment

In an initial meeting with your faculty mentor, you may also want to discuss the instructor's teaching philosophy, short- and long-term plans for the course, and how the course fits into the department curriculum. Additionally, you may want to request a list of assignments, course calendar (topics by week), old exams, and section handouts. If pertinent, you may also want to request a tour of the room you will be teaching in and demonstrations on any unfamiliar materials/equipment (particularly if you have a studio TA assignment).

If the instructor for the course does not contact you with the support you need *at least* one week before the beginning of the term, you should contact the instructor and request what you need. If you cannot get in touch with the instructor, please advise the Staff Graduate Advisor (Carol). TAs and instructors share joint responsibility for ensuring that each understands the division of work responsibilities. When in doubt, ask.

Instructors vary widely in their mentorship style and the amount of direction they provide to TAs. Some instructors hold weekly mentoring sessions for all TAs. Others expect TAs to contact them for input on an as-needed basis. If you are not getting the guidance you need to meet the expectations of your Taship, communicate your needs to the instructor. If this does not work, you may want to seek outside help from staff, other TAs and other faculty.

It's a good idea to use tact and good judgment when troubleshooting problems with your faculty supervisor. Some professors are more receptive to TA concerns than others. Be careful not to step on the instructor's toes. Marching into the instructor's office and making demands is not advisable. Even though there might be times when you are fully justified in your frustration with your faculty mentor, working out problems with diplomacy and tact will help you maintain a positive working relationship. This is particularly important if they are likely to serve on your committee. Also, you might not fully understand the instructor's strategy – your criticisms of the faculty member may be unjustified and misinformed. Seek to understand your professors' goals and complement their teaching methods. Remember, they are in charge.

Adapted from Umass TA Handbook www.umass.edu/cft/handbook

Section II: Planning

TAs are expected to be adequately prepared for office hours and sections. Most sections require the TA to spend as much time (if not more) preparing for section as the section itself takes in actual teaching time.

The UCSB TA Handbook (<http://oic.id.ucsb.edu/ta-handbook>) suggests the following formula for Teaching Assistant success:

Plan what you are going to teach

Implement what you've planned

Evaluate what you've implemented

Let's start with planning ...

Planning:

To plan is to set priorities in order to maximize time and resources. It is crucial that you take the time to determine key course goals and the topics/skills students must master before the term starts. Then, develop section activities to build student skill levels in order to meet course goals. Decisions on course content should come out of the instructional objectives established by the course instructor.

You'll want to clearly understand what students should be able to do when they've completed a given segment of instruction. You'll also want to consider the level of student work and match your plans to student abilities. Make sure your plans are relevant to student needs.

It is also important to relay course/segment goals to students in class (as well as a timetable for completion) so that they are also clear on objectives. Establishing objectives will provide students with an accurate picture of what is expected of them.

A more detailed discussion of the planning process can be found in the online UCSB TA Handbook.

Developing Curriculum (aka "deciding what should be taught"):

Ultimately, the responsibility for developing curriculum lies with the instructor. However, TAs frequently play a role in this activity. Some TAs are asked by the instructor to develop assignments that develop student skills in working with the course concepts. Most TAs must plan section activities to support the curriculum.

In planning instructional strategies, you should ask yourself:

- *When should I lecture and when should I hold a discussion?*
- *When should I be showing students how to do something and when should I encourage them to do it themselves?*
- *When should I respond to a student question (give more information) and when should I encourage other students to respond (give opportunity for students to practice skills)?*
- *When should I review important concepts orally, when should I write them on the chalkboard, and when should I distribute a handout?*
- *When should I rely on my own expertise, and when should I seek outside sources (films, guest speakers, etc.)?*

It is difficult to develop meaningful curriculum without a clear picture of the course goals. Make sure you fully comprehend the goals of the course.

- *What do students need to know from the materials presented in lectures and reading?*
- *What skills must they develop?*
- *How will success be measured?*
- *What is the current student skill level?*
- *What do they need to meet the course goals?*
- *What types of information can I provide, activities can I plan, tools can I create to help them meet the course goals?*

Adapted from UCSB TA Handbook www.id.ucsb.edu/IC/TA/hdbk/main.html

Individual Class/Section Planning:

Once you have the big picture, it is much easier to determine what should happen in section and at what time in the course. Once you know what the students are supposed to learn, when they need these things and why they must learn these things, you can develop your section activities.

Remember to ...

- √ Read course material thoroughly prior to each section (reading assignments, handouts, paper assignments, etc.)
- √ Anticipate and prepare for questions.
- √ Tell your students the purpose of each section. Let them know what you will be doing and what is expected of them. List these objectives on the board.

Studio Assistants:

A studio teaching assistant will have a different kind of teaching experience than those who undertake their TAship as a section leader. Studio courses are distinct from core foundation courses in a number of ways:

- Undergraduate students who take studio courses will have completed all the foundation prerequisites (1A and 7-series), which means that they are already familiar with department procedures and policies and should have an intermediate or advanced level of conceptual preparation for the course.
- While students may lack technical skills at this stage, they should have a somewhat uniform base knowledge acquired from the suite of core courses specifically offered within the department. Transfer students are also expected to take 1A and 7-series courses before they may enroll in the studio program.
- Therefore, expectations of students may be at a higher level than that of foundation courses where students have little or no experience in the study of art theory and practice.
- Studio courses also differ from lecture courses in that they are more physical and hands-on than core classes in which content is disseminated through a lecture and then applied separately in section.
- Studio courses generally meet six contact hours a week and students are actively working in lab environments during the entire duration of each 3-hour class. Teaching and learning are concurrent and interactive. There is a constant need for one-on-one attention and individual mentorship between TA and students.

Given this unique environment, studio TAs are given the opportunity to work in consort with the faculty member who leads the class rather than running sections alone. This traditional mentorship training is an ideal means to acquire basic knowledge in teaching method and style through observation and collaboration with an experienced faculty member. Faculty members should understand that this is a learning situation for the TA as well. Oftentimes, faculty will give assignments to TAs to design their own lecture, demo or assignment as part of their TA training experience. It is an excellent opportunity for exchange.

As a studio assistant in the Department of Art, you may be required to participate in a range of hands-on, technical training activity in addition to your attendance of lectures and labs as part of the studio course content. Studio TAships vary radically from area to area and from faculty member to faculty member. Thus, TAs should consult their faculty mentor as to role and responsibilities prior to the initiation of the class.

Generally, studio assistants are required to perform hands-on support to classroom activity, such as preparation and execution of all technical demonstrations. This may include order and acquisition of materials (which require a departmental PO# from the financial officer and a minimum of one-week notice prior to the date of demonstration), preparing and duplicating handouts, preparing materials and facility for execution of demonstration, supervision of clean-up activity and after-hours lab supervision. (TAs are required to hold office hours. As determined by the instructor, studio assistants are required to hold on average two office hours per week, as a percentage of their time commitment with the class. In consultation with the instructor, it is the responsibility of the TA to designate the time and location of their office hours. An example of the use of office hours is that one hour may be held for drop in appointments and one hour may be designated for appointments specifically made in advance by students. TA's should give ample warning via email and physical posting at the location if office hours will not be held for a particular date or rescheduled. Within the studio program, hours are designated to labs and generally support studio lab activity of undergraduate students after class hours – evenings and weekends). Studio assistants may also be required to conduct technical demonstrations with close supervision of the faculty member.

Given that TAs are not necessarily trained for the class, it is imperative that the TA seek information and training from appropriate faculty or staff technical assistant prior to the class activity. For example, if welding is a required activity, students must consult faculty or Ken Yokota in their training and preparation for that technical component of the class.

TAs should always request a course syllabus from the faculty member at least one week prior to the class. This syllabus should include course schedule and outline of activity and demonstrations performed, allowing the TA to prepare for all levels of teaching in the classroom. Sometimes, faculty will project 2-week or 5-week schedules, allowing for evolution of the course. Make sure that faculty keep you informed ahead of schedule so that you, as a studio TA, feel prepared and confident within an active, hands-on training environment.

Quick Start:

The following checklists are provided to give you a “Quick Start” to your new assignment. While these checklists are most pertinent to section leaders, studio assistants may benefit from them as well by adapting these lists to the requirements of their particular assignment.

Do Before TAship
(Checklist):

- Meet with your instructor:
 - Ask about expectations, your role.
 - Find out how you should spend your time, how the responsibilities between Faculty/TA breakdown.
 - Get copies of basic class materials (course objectives, course syllabus, course calendar/topics by week, student project descriptions, course reader/texts, grading policy, and any other required materials for sections/labs).
 - Agree on your next steps with instructor (particularly if development is required to meet expectations).
 - Find out how autonomous you can be in determining section/lab activities.
 - Find out if there are regular TA meetings; if not, plan to regularly touch base with your faculty mentor in office hours.
 - Get the instructor's code for the copying machine in the mailroom and in Ellison from the staff financial person. Get clarification of whether new grads will be given their own copy code vs. asking for the instructor's and what the amount of copies allotted are per quarter. indicate the location of the copy machines and information on proper troubleshooting protocol.
Ask about "crashing" policies/procedures.
 - Get add codes.
- Read and digest all material. If this is not possible, at least read the first few weeks worth of material so that you can respond to student questions and plan for your first few sections.
- Get a room key. Also get any other required keys (AV cabinets, supply closets, etc.)
Visit your classroom, make sure you have all needed equipment/furniture. Make sure everything works and that you know how to use/access everything you need. Make sure you have supplies as well (chalk, etc.) Make arrangements for anything that you need. The art dept (Troy) checks out some equipment (cameras, video projectors), Kerr Hall Media Services is also a resource for slide, overhead, and data/video projectors. Joel checks out lighting kit's for the Lighting Studio.
- Locate your mailbox.
- Determine when and where you will hold office hours.
- Meet with other TAs (if applicable) to brainstorm for the course, coordinate materials, get advice. Seek out both current and former/experienced TAs for the course.
- Prepare materials for the first day (see next checklist).

Do on Day One of Your Section
Checklist

(not necessarily in order)

Arrive early to set-up your room:

- arrange chairs/tables
- set up special equipment you plan to use
- organize your paperwork (and your thoughts)

Do on Day One of Your Section

Checklist (Cont'd)

- ❑ Put key course information on the board:
 - Course number and name
 - Your name and email address (you might want to set up a unique address)
 - Your office hours times, days and location
- ❑ Start getting to know your students:
 - Chat with students before class
 - Take roll
 - Ask for information on students (see *1st Day Questionnaire* on the next page)
 - Ask students to introduce themselves to the class, start to learn student names
 - Encourage students to visit you in office hours
- ❑ Tell students who you are:
 - Academic background
 - Studio specialty, interests
- ❑ Distribute a section syllabus with key information (don't duplicate the lecture syllabus, provide additional information here only as needed to explain section requirements). Your syllabus will most likely include many of the following: Your name, email address, course/section numbers, meeting time/location, office hour info, materials students will need to supply, name of textbook(s) and author(s), policies/procedures, information on assignments, grading systems/breakdowns, section goals, and explanation of how section supports the main lecture.
- ❑ It is very important to also verbally explain how the section supports the key course goals. Provide an overview of what students can expect in section (in class projects, papers, activities to reinforce course material, reading discussions, etc.)
- ❑ Tell them how to master the course (see *A Dozen Tips on How to do Well in 1A* in the next section of this handbook).
- ❑ Review key administrative policies (adds/drops, attendance, etc.)
- ❑ Field student questions regarding the class.
- ❑ Although it's probably not a good idea to cover a lot of actual course material yet, start teaching on the very first day. Get the ball rolling. Plan an activity or discussion related to the course content.
- ❑ Show the students the materials they will need and where to get them:
 - art supplies
 - course reader, texts
 - school supplies, zip disks
 - copies of forms/worksheets
- ❑ Give assignments, instructions to prepare students for the next meeting.
- ❑ Try to be enthusiastic and approachable.

Adapted from Karron G. Lewis, "What to do the First Day of Class" from 398T Instructor Handbook, University of Texas at Austin.

Art Studio 1A Visual Literacy Questionnaire

Crashing? Yes No (enrolled)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Class Standing: _____

Major: _____

What art/art history courses have you had? Where?

Why are you taking this class?

What do you hope to get from this class? What do you want to learn?

What other classes are you enrolled in this quarter?

How many total units are you taking this quarter?

Do you have any “fears” about this class? Are you apprehensive about anything regarding this class?

Section III: Execution

Communicating Course Requirements, Policies and Expectations:

Normally, course requirements are spelled out in the instructor's syllabus. However, you may want to develop supplementary materials to further communicate expectations. The following is one example of a supplementary handout that has been used in *IA Visual Literacy*. This example outlines common sense tactics to help students master the course. Again, you'll most likely want to work with your instructor and past TAs to develop this type of material.

A Dozen Tips on How to do Well in IA

- ❑ **Show up** to everything (lectures, guest speakers, films, field trips). **Follow the attendance procedures** so that you get full credit for your attendance.
- ❑ Do all the **reading** before lecture each week. Be prepared. Take notes in your book/reader while you read. Question the material. Relate it to your paper and art. Highlight key info. Deface your books. Use them up. Color in them. Get your money's worth. Engage in extreme reading.
- ❑ **Listen** carefully to lectures, take good notes (main points, key ideas, concepts, issues, vocabulary/definitions, facts, anything the instructor reads carefully, repeats or writes on the board, conclusions, relationships/patterns, etc.) **Engage** in the material and question it (relate the material to your life, your art, question it ... do you agree with the ideas presented in class?)
- ❑ **Ask questions** (in lecture, to guest speakers, during discussions, on field trips, during office hours).
- ❑ Make **comments** in class, share your insights, and participate in class discussions.
- ❑ **Complete all assignments** to the best of your ability.
- ❑ **Seek assistance** when you need help (Instructor's office hours, TA's office hours, email, CLAS, classmates, etc.)
- ❑ Try to **get to know your instructor and/or TA** (participate in class, visit office hours).
- ❑ **Write your papers on topics/works that interest you.** This will help you engage in your paper, work harder on it, and make it more relevant to you. This will also usually make the paper more interesting for the reader.
- ❑ **Start working on papers early** so that you can identify relevant issues in the lecture/reading as you go (this will make writing your paper easier, more efficient). This is also important if you need extra assistance (with writing, understanding concepts, formulating your ideas ... you have more time to get feedback on outlines/drafts if you get an early start on papers.)
- ❑ **Make friends in class.** Trade information. Share notes. At finals time, study with your friends from class (develop index cards, mock test questions, a vocabulary list, etc.) Ask them to read your paper drafts, get feedback from them.
- ❑ If you are having a hard time understanding the reading, **get a second opinion** (internet, dictionary of art terms, other references.) Look for other ways to understand the ideas – then go back over the reading (to see if it makes more sense.)

Lecture vs. Discussions:

If your section is primarily a discussion section, don't forget to include the discussion part. Lecturing to your students is not a discussion. Don't merely repeat another version of the course lecture in section. If your students weren't paying attention to the experienced lecturer, it is doubtful they'll listen to you. Excessive lecturing can be a waste of time in section. Yes, give them any new information they need. And, yes, go over material that might have been unclear or difficult – present it in another format. But, you'll also want to create opportunities in section for students to practice applying the material. Students learn more and better when they actively engage in the material (vs. passive listening). Active learning techniques wake up your students and permit them to test their own ideas within the themes of the course material. Plan your sections to incorporate active learning techniques.

Many new TAs say they have a difficult time leading discussions. But, when you ask them what they are doing in section, you'll often find out that all they do is casually ask students what they thought of the reading. This minimalist approach to leading discussions is not likely to generate much of a response. More likely, the TA will be faced with a sea of bored, apathetic stares in response to this approach. If you want to generate student interest, you need to do a little planning and use a little imagination.

Consider breaking students into smaller groups (4-5 students per group) and giving them a task to do within that group that draws on material from the lecture/reading (a problem to solve, questions to answer, issue to discuss, film or artwork to analyze, case study to dissect). If you can incorporate interesting audio-visual material into your group activities, that will also stimulate additional interest. Ask yourself: *How can you incorporate film clips, television clips, slides of artwork, game formats, and examples?*

After students have had time to work in a group, ask each group to report their results out to the class while you moderate the discussion. Well-designed group activities are a very effective way to get *all* students actively engaged in the course material. A list of discussion approaches to explore in your section is included at the end of this section. We encourage you to further investigate ways to incorporate active learning methods into your teaching. Effectively used, these techniques will also make your sections lively, fun and productive. For more tips on holding discussions, see Umass TA Handbook www.umass.edu/cft/handbook

Student Preparation: Another thing to keep in mind ... a big roadblock to successful section discussions is lack of preparation on the part of students. One key reason students don't participate in discussions is that they have not kept up with the course reading/assignments. Developing mechanisms to help motivate students to keep up with course work is a good idea. The next page includes an example of one such mechanism used successfully in 1A. Students were required to turn in a brief recap of the weekly readings each section. These were not graded but did count for a portion of the course

5. Which concepts from this week relate to you/your art/your world?

Group Critique Sessions:

Running studio critique sessions can be a challenging task. Students are frequently reluctant to speak up in crits for a variety of reasons. They might not want to criticize their peers, they may be shy, it might not be “cool,” they may feel that they don’t know enough and/or they may fear sounding stupid.

The TAs objective in running a critique session is to direct a lively discussion that explores formal, conceptual and contextual issues of student work in order to see how images are received, determine what meaning has been interpreted and find opportunities to further enhance the work. Planning and communicating the critique structure in advance to students should help. Specifically, you will want to identify their role in the critique ahead of time. With time for advance preparation, students are generally more willing to engage in critique sessions.

There are many, many techniques for running a critique. You may want to experiment with various formats (any that you are familiar with) to see what generates the best discussion.

The following page (Questioning Art) summarizes questions relating to form, content and context that you may want to pose to your students during critiques. Note: When using this structure, try to bridge between issues of form, content and context – explain how form, content and context are not really separate issues but relational. Also, note that this structure can be used to guide student writing assignments on art topics as well as help them to think through their own art practice.

QUESTIONING ART

What is it about? What do you see? Is it successful?

What is the subject of the work? (CONTENT)

- *Is it representational or abstract?*
- *Is it narrative, symbolic .. or analytical, formal?*
- *Is the subject the object(s) depicted or is it really about something else? What does the work make you think about?*
- *What does the work “tell” you? How do you respond to it?*
- *How does the work make you feel? (angry? bored? peaceful? concerned? ...)*
What psychological impact does the work have on you?

What formal qualities does the work have? (FORM)

- *What materials are used? How are they manipulated? To what end? Does the medium carry a charge?*
- *Is the work flat or does it have texture?*
- *Is the work highly detailed, visually complex or simple, elegant?*
- *Are scale and proportion important to the impact of the work?*
- *Is the work tight, illustrational or gestural, expressive?*
- *Is space created through the use of perspective (1 pt., 2 pt., 3 pt., atmospheric) or does the work deny depth using a flat picture plane?*
- *What quality of line or type of mark making is used? (confident? uncertain? angular? curvilinear? geometric? organic? sketchy? free flowing?)*
- *Is the composition stable? balanced? harmonious? decentered? fractured? symmetrical? How could the composition be improved?*
- *Is there an organizational system guiding the composition (such as a grid)?*
- *Do the negative and positive shapes work together to create visual interest? Is cropping used? Other dimensional aspects?*
- *Is the work dark or light? How much tonal variation exists?*
- *What color schemes are used and why? Are the colors naturalistic? synthetic? monochromatic? harmonious? shocking?*
- *What is the focal point, the center of interest? How do your eyes “move through the image? Do diagonals play a role here?*
- *Is text included in the work?*
- *Is the work’s formal language an intrinsic part of its content?*

Does the work call to mind a particular “ism,” movement or artist? (CONTEXT)

- *Who made the work? Does this shape the point of view of the work?*
- *Does the work relate to the time and place it was created?*
- *Is the work influenced by a particular style?*
- *Is the work personal or political?*
- *What questions does the artwork pose? Does the work open up questions about self? society? environment? culture? What are the theoretical underpinnings?*
- *Who does the work communicate to? Who is the audience? Where is it shown?*

Adapted from Dr. Karen Kleinfelder’s CSULB Contemporary Art course packet.

For the Love of Forms:

Forms are great. Worksheets, questionnaires, checklists ... you gotta love them! They can be a handy mechanism to collect information from students in an organized, easy to understand format. They have an official quality to them and communicate that you mean business. Students generally find it more efficient to fill out a form than to write an essay. Forms tend to make instructor guidelines very clear.

Use forms to check understanding of material, collect data, guide students through a studio process, etc. Also, forms are generally easier for an instructor to review than some of the alternatives because information is recorded in an organized, consistent way.

We've included a few examples of forms in this handbook – some that have been used in Art Studio sections and some that we are using with you: ☺

- ❑ Art Studio 1A Visual Literacy 1st Day Student Questionnaire, pg. 9
- ❑ Weekly Reading Worksheet, pg. 12
- ❑ Day One Checklist, pg. 7

Consider developing forms to help your students with the course material. Some quick tips for developing forms:

- √ make them easy to read, organized
- √ spell everything correctly
- √ format to help guide student responses
- √ clearly indicate instructions for students
- √ use forms to streamline processes – not to make more work (make them useful)

Student Development:

At times, you will encounter students in your classes who might not be adequately prepared to succeed in your class and/or the University. These students might not know how to effectively:

- take lecture notes
- read complex texts
- write papers
- prepare for tests
- manage time/work
- comprehend course material and/or instructions

When you discover basic student skill deficiencies, put students in contact with the appropriate campus resources. It is particularly important that you are aware of CLAS (Campus Learning Assistance Services) which provides free tutoring services, skill workshops, and a writing lab to students. Refer students to CLAS directly – let them know what free services are available to them. Students are almost always appreciative of developmental advice -- your referral could make a big difference in their college career.

Sometimes, the majority of the class could benefit from in-section tutoring on a basic skill. For certain classes (such as 1A, and possibly 7B), it may be worth spending time in section to address common student problem areas. The next page show a handout created for a 1A section to help students succeed on course writing assignments.

1A Paper Tips

1. Find an “angle” to the paper that you are interested in – it’ll make the paper a more interesting piece of writing.
2. Clearly articulate a thesis statement. Develop the points in your paper to prove/disprove this thesis. Use concrete examples/analysis/factual data to support your points.
3. Think of this paper as “analysis” – not just a “rehash” of other people’s writing. Although you will absolutely want to refer to existing “secondary” sources such as show catalogs, art historical references, the reader, etc. – a good portion of your paper should be based on your own observations, opinions and analysis of what you see (working the visual images). Don’t focus solely on what the museum says, the artist says or the art history book says. *What do you say?* Use other sources as they support your ideas in order to argue your case and provide background information.
4. This course fulfills a writing requirement. Spelling and grammar count. Use spell check. Reread your paper several times. Have your best friend (the English major) check your paper. Come to office hours. Check out other writing resources on campus, writing references in the library. See tips on other handouts.
5. *Paper 2:* Check out the material related to the show on reserve in the Art Library (see black binders against the wall beyond the reference desk).
6. Carefully read the handout on the writing assignment. Make sure to follow Instructor’s guidelines.
7. Although this is in Instructor’s handout – remember to refer to material from the reading. Incorporate it into your analysis.
8. Although it is possible to write a good paper for this assignment without lengthy discussions of individual works, most of you will need to analyze individual works to support your thesis. See the Dondis reading to guide you through “formal analysis.” “Work” the images. Remember, the title of this class is “Visual Literacy” – “read” the images using the language of art.
9. In some part of your paper, you will most likely want to include a general overview of the show – theme, overview of subject matter, aesthetics, media, presentation, etc.
10. If you use the ideas/words of others – give them credit. Don’t plagiarize.

1A Paper Tips (Continued)

Page 2

11. If you are having difficulty starting your papers – ask yourself some basic questions to start thinking about the work in order to identify possible approaches to your paper (such as *What was my response to (the topic)? ... individual works/elements? ... the presentation of the work? ... the context in which the work was made?*) See Dondis article in reader, the *Questioning Art* handout and Barnett's *A Guide to Writing About Art*.
12. Also, refer to the questions the instructor has listed in the paper handout (there are "hints" in here!) Remember, you'll want to treat at least two to three of the questions the instructor has listed under the paper option you've selected.
13. After you've written your paper, take a break from it. Then, revisit it and evaluate your work:
 - How can it be improved?
 - Does the order "flow?"
 - Is the paper an interesting piece of writing?
 - Do you clearly argue your case and support it?
 - Is your opening interesting?
 - How about your closing?
 - Do you have a thesis?
 - Have you met the requirements of the assignment?
 - Are spelling and punctuation correct?
 - Have you carefully checked all facts, names, dates and quotations?
 - Have you eliminated needless words and inflated language?
 - What can you do to improve the paper?
14. Everyone has his or her own approach to writing. Some instructors suggest outlining your paper using the Harvard format. This works great if you know in advance what you think about the subject. If you are one of those people who write to help them think, it might be good for you to type in random ideas, thoughts and pieces of info into your computer to start. Then begin to work with this material – moving things around, adding details and explanation, editing out nonsense. Once you get your ideas down on paper, build your case -- refining the language, playing with the words and ideas. As you work, more ideas should come to you. This process can be like making a ceramic object – pushing, pulling, and forming clay with your fingers – manipulating it until you like what is shaping up in front of you. If it sucks, don't be afraid to wad it up and try another approach.
15. Ultimately, we're looking for interesting writing. This will require original thinking and experimentation. Most of the time, "interesting failures" are more thought provoking than "safe successes." 19

Student Records:

Many instructors will ask TAs to keep class records. For example, you might be asked to track attendance, grades on assignments, participation in discussions, etc. Use care to collect, accurately track/record and file information -- usually course grades are based on this information. You may want to invest in some sort of record book (available at the bookstore in the UCEN).

You may also want to consider using a spreadsheet like Excel to keep class records and calculate grades. The University provides workshops on office productivity software if you do not know how to use these programs (check Instructional Computing website – see Campus Resources list).

Class Participation:

Some TAs give students credit for “class participation.” If you decide to do this, define what that means up-front – state your criteria. *Are you counting quality, quantity, or specific types of participation? Are you only interested in class discussion or are you also counting after class questions, office hour visits, email inquiries, questions posed in lecture and other forms of participation?* Consider offering shy students options to participate that are less threatening than speaking out in class (this can be hard for some students).

Student Adds/Drops:

Students wishing to add your class must get an approval code from you. You will be given a sheet of add codes from your supervising instructor for your section(s) at the beginning of the term. It’s a good idea to wait until Week 2 of the quarter to process add codes (after the dust settles down from the first week of the quarter). Once you have given out add codes to students, make sure they understand that they must still complete the enrollment process to add the course (they must still enroll through the Gold system). This is particularly important to mention to new students (freshmen and transfer students who may not be familiar with the system).

Also, be sure you know the various add/drop deadlines so that you can advise students accordingly (see quarterly schedule of classes).

Section IV: Student Performance, Motivation and Classroom Management

Student Expectations:

Most students expect the TA to 1) be knowledgeable in the course material and 2) to present the material in a clear, easy to understand, and systematic way.

Establish goals in cooperation with the course instructor. Make sure you understand what students are expected to understand and also what they should be able to do as the course progresses. A clear list of goals for the course will help you understand how to best use your time in class as well as communicate expectations to students. Plan activities to meet student needs.

Classroom Environment:

Don't underestimate the importance of creating a positive classroom environment. Frequently, the general classroom environment can make or break a class. A classroom filled with bright, eager students can make your job a breeze. An apathetic, unmotivated group of students can make your job incredibly difficult. Although this is not completely in your control, you'll want to take steps to develop a positive classroom environment when you can.

This is a complex topic – not easily summarized in a manual of this scope. We suggest you spend time studying this topic and working with your instructor-mentor to develop skills in this area and to resolve problems that arise. If you are having difficulty creating a positive classroom environment, you may also want to seek advice from other faculty, other TAs and potentially a peer advisor in Instructional Development. There are also numerous books which address this topic.

Student Relations:

In all situations of teaching and learning within this department, including classroom, seminar, lab, lecture and studio environments, students are expected to maintain civility and respect for all present members, including faculty, administrative staff, graduate and undergraduate student colleagues. This includes any visiting academic members, guest lecturers or exchange students who might have temporary presence on this campus. Given the subjective nature of creative work within the classroom/studio, rigorous debate is part and parcel to productive learning. Students must give regard to their colleagues and their individual practice within studio and critique environments with due civility and respect, regardless of personal differences of opinion in quality assessment. Critical feedback on any process or work discussed must be conducive to productive analysis and evaluation.

Individual opinions offered must be supported by thoughtful, grounded positions of critical analysis. Unfounded, angry, aggressive, offensive, accusational statements directed at present faculty members, fellow students and/or their creative work must be distinguished from verbal communications characterized as “opinionated,” “negative” and “critical,” which may be productive modes of communication. Individuals who speak out of turn, or monopolize the conversation with no provision for others to counter their position may also be viewed as displaying inappropriate conduct. Individual behavior that violates the physical space of others by manner of close proximity or violent gesticulation, may also be considered objectionable behavior and grounds for disciplinary warning and action on the part of the department and/or university.

Distinctions of appropriate or inappropriate conduct will be assessed accordingly by the advisory faculty member. TAs should seek assistance from their faculty advisor, graduate advisor and department chair to resolve serious conduct issues. Our goal here is to promote responsible behavior in classroom/studio environments where verbal communication is grounded in productive, well-founded discourse.

Adapted from UCSB Art Department Conduct Code

Supervision and Feedback on Student Work:

It is very important to offer individual mentorship, especially in those courses in which students have limited direct contact with faculty members. The studio environment is a dynamic, dialogic space for observation and exchange between all members – allowing students to work on their own or at home will generally not be conducive to their productivity and learning experience. Without a heavy hand in supervision, students tend to be less motivated and less ambitious in the time and energy they put forth in their work. Because of the complex nature of the creative process, students will tend to contemplate and defer physical engagement. Supervision in the form of dialogue, advisement, and hands-on guidance on ongoing work in the classroom, lab and studio environment is key to the success of undergraduate work.

Feedback on student work may occur in a studio lab environment where students are working independently on projects, or, it may occur during critique sessions where collective dialogue facilitates the learning process ... TAs must be prepared for all capacities of communications with undergraduate students in the production of their work. See also “Group Critique Sessions” in Section III of this handbook for info on productive methodology.

Tests/Quizzes:

Tests and quizzes are normally prepared by the course instructor. However, at times you may feel the need to give quizzes in your sections. If so, we suggest you work closely with the instructor to develop quiz strategies and questions.

Grading:

TAs are expected to take measures to ensure that grades directly reflect course performance.

Grading serves many functions including:

- describing the worth, merit or value of student work
- improving the capacity of students to identify good work in order to improve self evaluation skills
- stimulating and encouraging good work
- communicating teacher's judgement of student progress
- identifying students for rewards or continued education
- identifying to the teacher where the class stands (what they have and have not learned)

Source: Barbara Gross Davis "Tools for Teaching"

As you know, students take grades seriously and, in many cases, personally. Many students are coming from high school situations where they were at the top of their class. College courses (particularly on the quarter system) tend to be academically demanding and most incoming students face more competition in the classroom than they are accustomed to. They have usually gone from being a big fish in a little pond to a little fish in a big pond. Many have not experienced getting grades lower than A's and potentially find their new academic situation jarring.

As such, it is important to communicate clear rationale and policies on grading. It is also extremely important to check and double-check each grade entry. This is particularly important when grades have been calculated manually. Grade entry mistakes are common and these mistakes are extremely upsetting to students.

Please also note that grades are confidential and cannot be posted. Make sure that your process for distributing grades protects student privacy.

Establishing Grading Standards and Systems:

Your instructor will most likely give you some guidelines for grading. However, you may need to come up with your own grading standards and systems. A few possible approaches include:

Quantitative Scoring: Student scores are tabulated quantitatively based on right and wrong answers. Grades are then assigned based on total scores either on a curve or straight percentage basis.

Point Model: Students accumulate points for accomplishing various goals on the assignment (ie up to 5 points for technique, 5 points for adhering to assignment parameters, 5 points for creativity/innovation and 5 points for content/conceptual complexity ...) Grades are then assigned numerically usually in a similar manner to percentage breakdowns in either a curve or as a straight percentage.

Grade Level Criteria: Assignments must meet certain criteria established for each grade – distinguishing features are evaluated in this system (ie A=technically superior, exceeds assignment requirements, conceptually innovative, outstanding in all areas; B=strong, meets requirements but either not as technically sound and/or conceptually innovative as A work; C=meets assignment but lacking in some way (either technique or conceptually); D=barely meets assignment requirements, a weak effort but still passing; F=not acceptable)

Pile Method: Projects are sorted a little more fluidly into piles by the TA. A's are put into one pile, B's in another, put your C's over there, your D's over here, etc. With this method, work is evaluated visually and grouped accordingly. Apples are put with apples. Oranges are put with oranges. This can work well with studio projects so that you can *see* how work compares to other class projects (aesthetically, technically and otherwise).

You will want to let your students know what your basic criteria and expectations are. Let them know what you will be doing to determine their grades. And, once again, work with your instructor as needed to establish appropriate grading standards and systems.

For more on grading see Barbara Gross Davis “Tools for Teaching.”

Adapted from UCSB Sociology Department TA Handbook and Barbara Gross Davis “Tools for Teaching”

Problem Resolution (Conduct Issues, Grade Disputes, Absences):

The most important feature of problem resolution is the provision of clear guidelines of teaching objectives and policies at the onset of the class. With a clear syllabus, which outlines in writing – expectations, absentee policy, grading policy and criterion for evaluation, TAs may avoid many disputes and disciplinary problems. In significant cases of conflict within the classroom, TAs should report incidents immediately to their supervisory faculty member for their guidance and input. If necessary, resolution may require intervention on the part of your faculty mentor or the department chair. Please refer to the Student Relations discussion in this handbook for more on student *conduct* in the classroom.

Regarding *absences*, TAs, with their faculty mentor, should determine a guideline for allowable number of missed classes and consequential penalties for missed classes. In the short, 10-week quarter, student absences are not looked upon favorably by the department. Generally, a docking of grades at the end of the quarter for each absence after one or two, and the failure of the course for more than 3 absences, may be considered general departmental policy and appropriate/justifiable disciplinary action. However, students must be informed beforehand, and IN WRITING, that this is the policy.

The most frequent student complaints concern *grades*. Grade disputes are best avoided by all of the above mentioned suggestions, such as a clear syllabus outlining tangible expectations for the class. Critical to the subjective nature of teaching and learning in an art studio environment is an established set of defined criterion for evaluation. Criterion may include:

- attendance to all lectures, sections and labs
- completion of all assignments in a timely fashion
- participation in discussion, critiques
- technical skill mastery/improvement
- effort (despite outcome of project)
- experimentation and exploration
- collective peer evaluation

Absolutely paramount to grade evaluation is an ongoing dialogue with students, regarding their record of performance PRIOR to the end of the quarter. This may require periodic meetings, elaborating on grades given for an assignment, performance evaluations or warnings of absenteeism. These should occur at intervals throughout the quarter, where students have the opportunity to know where they stand and how they might improve their performance before the quarter is complete. If subjectivity poses a problem for evaluation, seek creative ways for peer assessment or articulate in detail why the grade was earned and how it could have been different. Often, students are satisfied when they know why they earned the grade they did. Avoid the emphasis of personal opinion in favor of supportive, productive suggestions such as the utilization of examples of other artists or works produced in the classroom itself. Comparison and contrast work well in clarifying subjective situations which arise in the critique situation.

Be prepared and patient when students contest assignment/course grades. In dealing with student *grade disputes*:

- Ask the student to clarify their grievance and justification for a grade change (in writing if possible) before talking to them.
- Make sure you review your own records and justification so that you are prepared to have an informed discussion on how the grade was assigned.

- You may want to consider showing the student's work to another TA or your faculty mentor for a second opinion of your grading.
- At times, you may want to show the student examples of peer work at different grade levels and explain how that work differs from their work (sometimes it helps students to see the difference between, for example, an "A" project and a "B" project.)
- If students are not satisfied with your assessment of their work, refer them to the professor. If a solution cannot be reached through the professor, the department undergraduate advisor and department chair may be able to resolve the conflict.
- Try to be open-minded and fair when considering grade disputes. Be willing to objectively review your criteria and calculations. But, at the same time, don't cave in a student request for a grade change just to resolve the problem when you believe your grading methodology is valid.

Grade dispute suggestions adapted from UCSB Sociology Department TA Handbook.

Emergency Situations:

If a student has a **medical emergency** in your class, send a student out of the room to dial 911. It is useful to know the location of the nearest public phone if your section is held after 5 p.m. or during lunchtime, when offices are closed.

Troubled students should be referred to the staff of the **Counseling Center** (the bright pink building off Storke Plaza between South Hall and the Art complex).

As you encounter other student problems that you cannot resolve, consult your faculty supervisor, the department graduate advisor and/or the department chair for advice/mediation.

Section V: Enhancing Teaching Skills

Sources of Mentorship/Evaluations:

The most immediate measure of your teaching abilities is directly from your students. *How are they responding in class? Are they doodling? Yawning? Making frequent trips to the restroom?* These actions could signal that your class isn't filled with Dead Poet's Society moments like you might have assumed. The easiest thing to do to get feedback on your teaching is to ask your students how the course is working for them. Ask them what could be changed throughout the term.

Also, consider getting a second opinion about your teaching from other sources. Here are a few possibilities for getting feedback on your teaching:

The Professor in Charge of the Course

Course instructors may want to sit in on one of your classes at some point during the term to see how you are doing. Usually the professor will discuss your performance and make some suggestions for improving your teaching. Some professors also write written evaluations of TA performance. If you are not getting the feedback you need from your professor, ask them for more input. Ask them to sit in on your class, meet with them at office hours to discuss your performance or request a written evaluation of your performance.

Another TA

Sometimes another TA will be a less threatening source of input. Ask another TA to sit in on your class and provide some feedback on what they see happening in your class. Working collaboratively with other TAs for the class can be an effective way to improve your classroom performance. We encourage you to share ideas and materials with other TAs. Past TAs are a rich source of ideas and advice. They will most likely have many ideas about effectively running sections, handling student problems, and negotiating effective working relationships with faculty members.

Most are eager to share their experience with you. However, since they are busy (just like you are), they probably won't hunt you down to offer their advice. Take the initiative to seek them out. Most are very willing to pass on their expertise if you just take the time to ask.

The Instructional Development/TA Development Center

Instructional Development and the TA Development Center can provide support for TA development.

Instructional Development, located in Kerr Hall, provides services to assist faculty in meeting instructional goals including assistance in designing instruction and improving teaching skills.

The *TA Development Center* (Kerr Hall, x3341) offers a variety of services to support TAs:

- Classroom videotaping (at no charge)
- Consultation on instructional issues by appointment
- Instructional grants to develop instructional materials and procedures beyond the scope of normal TA duties
- TA training seminars
- Instructional videotapes (available in the Kerr Learning Lab, x3963, housed under call numbers LB5 and LB6)

Student Evaluations

At the end of the term, a course evaluation questionnaire will be administered in your course. You will be provided with a summary statistical report of student answers usually about 6-8 weeks after the quarter end. This report gives the percentage breakdown of student answers benchmarked against departmental and campus averages. This process will provide you with a good sense of how your teaching compares to other TAs. See sample student evaluation form in this section.

Self Evaluations

Another possible way to measure your teaching is to check in with yourself and conduct a self-evaluation. Ask yourself:

- *What is happening in your class?*
- *How are students responding to your teaching?*
- *What's working?*
- *What isn't working?*
- *What would improve your teaching performance? (more examples, illustrations, organization, student interaction?)*
- *What do you need to do to improve?*

Adapted from Umass TA Handbook www.umass.edu/cft/handbook

Improving Your Teaching:

Just by continuing to TA, your teaching skills will improve. Additionally, here are a few pointers to speed up the process of building your teaching skills:

- √ *Practice.* If you know which aspects of your teaching need work.
- √ *Observe successful teachers.* Sit in on sections of successful TAs and popular teachers. Analyze their performance. Ask yourself what makes them effective. Identify aspects of their style/technique that you might be able to successfully adopt.
- √ *Learn about learning.* Teaching is more than just disseminating information. A good teacher is also able to light a fire under their students – spark motivation and innovation. Learn what it takes to encourage student learning. Experiment with new approaches to the course material. Reading the material in this handbook is a good start. Also check out resources on teaching in the library, TA Development Office, local bookstores and online. “Tools for Teaching” by Barbara Gross Davis is an excellent book outlining a wide range of practical teaching techniques (available at Borders) – used as a key reference for this handbook.
- √ *Continually evaluate your own methods and materials.* How can they be improved, upgraded? How can you make the material more interesting, more compelling?

Adapted from Queen’s Univ. TA Handbook www.queensu.ca/idc/trainers/eval/tips.html

Section VI: Policies, Processes & Resources

TA Conduct:

TAs are expected to meet classes, to post and keep regular office hours open to students without prior appointment, to hold examinations as scheduled, to evaluate student work in a timely manner, and to ensure that grades directly reflect course performance.

The University is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which all persons who participate in University programs and activities can work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation, including inappropriate sexual behavior. Sexual harassment is prohibited both by law and by University policy. (APM-035, Appendix A)

UCSB Sexual Harassment policy can be found on the web (<https://oeosh.ucsb.edu>). You are responsible for being familiar with these policies, for behaving appropriately within their guidelines, and for assisting/referring students who have a sexual harassment concern. (Don't "date" your students.)

Office Hours:

TAs normally schedule office hours for two hours per week. You will be asked to specify your office hours the first week of the quarter (the Receptionist will send you a form). If a TA must cancel office hours or sections due to illness or another conflict, the TA should notify students ASAP – preferably by an announcement in the course lecture, but at least by having a notice posted at the appropriate location. The instructor and Art Department Office should also be notified.

TAs hold office hours in a variety of locations. Please check with your instructor to see if s/he has a preference as to where your office hours should be held. The following is a list of locations you may want to consider for your office hours depending on your situation:

eStudio: To be used by TAs leading sections of digital courses (Art 7D, 22 and Art 19-Digital). Check eStudio schedule and confirm office hour times with the eStudio staff supervisor prior to announcing to students.

Nicoletti's at the UCEN: Mmmm ... coffee! A favorite place to hold office hours. Students seem to like the central (and neutral) location. Nice view. Is sometimes loud and busy. The patio can be great on a sunny day. Good caffeine buzz.

Stadium: Although it is difficult for students to reach you, it would be good for studio classes and show your work in progress.

Your Classroom: Check availability. Possibly a good option. (Be sure to arrange for the room to be unlocked or get a key for your use.) Some studio assistantships may require you to hold office hours in the course studio (check with your faculty mentor.)

Supplies, Other Expenses:

Most instructors have a supply budget for classes. If you need to purchase special supplies or equipment for your class, check with your instructor prior to making special purchases to see if funds are available to reimburse you.

In the course of the quarter you may find yourself having to check out media equipment for lectures, demos, or student projects. Refer to Kerr Hall 1160 for policies on reserving and returning equipment. Kerr Hall Media Services is a resource for slide, overhead, and data/video projectors. The Art Dept (Troy) checks out some equipment (cameras, video projectors). Joel checks out lighting kits for the Lighting Studio.

Confidentiality:

All completed assignments, exams, grades, correspondence and other information about individual students in class should be kept confidential except where the student has given written consent. Specifically:

- Grades should not be posted by name, nor by any identifying number such as student ID or social security number.
- Graded assignments should not be left in a public place.

These provisions are consistent with Federal and State privacy laws.

Adapted from <http://oic.id.ucsb.edu/handbook-teaching/legal-considerations/posting-grades-returning-papers-record-confidentiality>

Safety/Student Problems:

If a student comes to you because they are being harassed by someone else, take the complaint seriously. On rare occasions, a TA may be threatened or harassed by a student, either in person or by electronic mail. The TA must immediately report the incident to the instructor and to the staff graduate advisor (Carol), who will attempt to resolve the problem.

Additionally, if a student approaches you with personal problems, direct them to the appropriate area on campus that can help them (Counseling Services, undergraduate advisor, etc.)

Campus Resources

Handy Phone Numbers:

Arts Library	893-2850	
Image Resource Collection	893-2509	Arts 1245
ASE/UAW (Union)/Grievances	884-1923	
Bookstore	893-3271	UCEN
Bookstore (texts)	893-3539	
Campus Learning Assistance Services (CLAS)	893-4248	Bldgs. 477 & 300
Campus Police	893-3446	
Career & Counseling Center	893-4419	Bldg. 599
Disabled Students: Special Services Program	893-2668	
Film Ordering	893-3518	Kerr Hall 1204
Graduate Student Association	893-3824	UCEN
Instructional Video Tapes	893-3963	Kerr Learning Lab
Media Equipment	893-3549	Kerr Hall 1160
Office of Instruct. Consultation/TA Training	893-3341	Kerr Hall 1130
Ombudsman	893-3285	Trailer 989
Photographic Services	893-2448	Kerr Hall 1120
TV Services (TA Videotaping)	893-4346	Kerr Hall

Handy Websites:

Campus Telephone Directory	www.commserv.ucsb.edu
Division of Student Affairs	www.sa.ucsb.edu
General Catalog	www.catalog.ucsb.edu
Graduate Division	www.graddiv.ucsb.edu
Graduate Handbook (UCSB)	http://oic.id.ucsb.edu/ta-handbook
Graduate Student Association (GSA)	www.gsa.ucsb.edu
2015 President – Zach Rentz	president@www.ucsbgsa.com
Instructional Computing	www.ic.ucsb.edu
Student Email Directory	www.umail.ucsb.edu/directory
UCSB Home Page	www.ucsb.ucsb.edu
UCSB TA Handbook	http://oic.id.ucsb.edu/ta-handbook

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