

GSI Workshop

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Acknowledgements

- Professor David Vogel
- Moshe Barach, Head GSI
- Professor Greg La Blanc

Agenda

- Part A: Administration
- Part B: The Students
- Part C: Becoming an Effective GSI

Part A: Administration

Getting Hired

- Congratulations on being hired as a Haas GSI! In order to become fully eligible (administrative-wise), you'll need to complete:
 - Paperwork (with Rosina Rocco) – please email Rosina rather than dropping in
 - The Online Ethics course (first 3 weeks)
 - Required for ALL GSIs
 - <http://gsi.berkeley.edu/ethics/index.html>

Getting Paid

- Payment on 1st of the month for 5 months
 - Fall Semester: Sept 1 to Jan 1
 - Spring Semester: Feb 1 to Jun 1
- Direct deposits can be arranged online via BLU: blu.berkeley.edu
- Otherwise, look for a check.

Important Admin Resources

- First Time GSI Checklist:
<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/teachingguide/presem/checklist.pdf>
- Textbooks & Study.Net
 - Dave Stuckey (S545A, dstuckey@haas.berkeley.edu)
- bCourses
 - ETS Training: Getting Started in bCourses
 - Training Calendar & Register at <http://ets.berkeley.edu/bcourses/>
 - Faculty member has to give you access

Important Admin Resources

- Office Hour Space
 - Contact Rosina to reserve F421 for your office hour.
 - Please do not use the PhD or MBA lounge to host office hours.
- Lectern keys: Kendall Dockham, S549
- Room Reservations – Contact Rosina Rocco
- Media Equipment – Contact Haas Helpdesk (Helpdesk@haas.berkeley.edu)

Important Admin Resources

- Photocopying
 - Don't do big copy jobs yourself
 - See the Haas Copy Center Manager) in the mailroom
 - Get your requests in EARLY
 - For small copy jobs, use GSI copy code.
 - Codes: MBA & UGBA: **7879**, EWMBA: **1995**, MFE: **1142**, XMBA: **2002**
- Stationary Supplies: Haas mailroom
 - Mailroom: S-545 “Mail & Duplicating Services”

Important Safety Information

- Identifying students of concern
 - UC Berkeley has a Students of Concern Committee that receives referrals pertaining to students of concern, collects additional information, and identifies and enacts appropriate strategies for addressing the situation
 - <http://campuslife.berkeley.edu/dean/berkeleycares/committee>
- Referrals through studentofconcern@berkeley.edu
- Shooting at Haas in November 2012 was the first time in the 113-year history of Haas an event like this occurred
- In event of emergency call UCPD immediately using 911 or 510-642-3333.
- Protocol for being in and surviving an active shooter incident
 - <http://police.berkeley.edu/safetyinfo/shooter.html>

GSI Union (UAW Local 2865)

- The Union is the organization collectively representing GSIs and readers:
 - When bargaining for a new contract with the university.
 - It advocates graduate student issues to policy makers and managers.
 - It can help students sort out issues with their departments.
 - Provides an opportunity for interaction with other faculties.
 - Has many opportunities for getting involved in policy issues.

Lecturer Union

- Unit 18
- UC-AFT Local 1474

Part B: The Students

Digital & Social

- Much more connected to each other, and expect to be connected to you
- “Slideware” isn’t enough
- Communication through multiple channels
- Uninhibited when criticizing anonymously

Undergrads

- Have little life experience
- Often need to be more directive (Fr/So vs. Jr/Sr)
- Excited

FTMBA

- May have some experience outside school
- Can be arrogant
- VERY demanding and quick to criticize
- Want real-world, practical experience
- Remember that this is a terminal degree

PT: MBAs

- Have a lot of experience
- Looking to expand opportunities
- Often looking for the formula
- Grades tend to be less important (although not unimportant)

Part C: Becoming an Effective GSI

The Role

- You are not...
 - The professor
 - The course designer
 - The final arbiter
- You are...
 - Teaching
 - Helping the professor with administrative tasks
 - Grading

GSI Responsibilities

- Prepare and lead discussion sections*
- Hold regular office hours
- Proctor exams
- Prepare, administer, and grade problem sets (or work with reader)
- Grade exams and papers (or work with Reader)
 - Timeliness is critical!!!
- Communicate regularly with course instructor
- Any additional work agreed to between you and the instructor prior to your appointment
 - e.g. Maintaining course website, bCourses, instructional software, etc.
- Be aware of your maximum hours (50%, - 340 hours; 25% - 170 hours; 37.5% - 255 hours)

Your “Customers”

- You have two “customers”, sometimes with conflicting needs or wants
 - The Professor
 - The Students

The Professor Relationship

- Communication is key – consult regularly
- Keep things in lockstep
- Timely and correct grading is critical
- Let the professor know what students are struggling with
- Avoid contradictions
- Handling student communications
- Feedback

Managing your relationship with the course instructor

- At your first meeting before the class starts:
 - Understand syllabus, course organization, and your role
 - Clearly define the tasks you will take on, how you will communicate, expectations for performance, for example:
 - When homework /exams will be returned, any grading requirements
 - Whether or not you' ll be expected to help with designing lecture/homework/exam
 - Whether or not you' ll be expected to review your lecture/discussion material with the instructor ahead of time
 - Whether or not you'll be expected to show up in lectures
 - What is your responsibility in maintaining course website/bCourses
 - What is the expectation on holding regular meetings with instructor

Managing your relationship with the course instructor

- During the semester:
 - Provide feedback to instructor as warranted
 - Students often more comfortable voicing dissatisfaction to GSI
 - Be constructive
 - Maintain a united front on key issues with the instructor
 - Extensions policy (e.g. DON'T give extensions!)
 - Grading/re-grading policy
 - What will be on the exam
 - Respond to faculty contact within 24 hours

Traits of Popular / Unpopular GSIs (The Instructor's Perspective)

Most Frequent Complaints by Course Instructors:

- Not excited about teaching (attitude problem)
- Cared more about his/her matters than the class
- Not supporting the instructor (uncooperative)
- Not returning the graded PS/exams on time and in order
- Not showing up in class
- Not putting in the expected number of hours

Traits of Popular / Unpopular GSIs

- Think back through your experiences with GSIs
 - Identify the best GSI you ever had
 - Identify the worst GSI you ever had
- What were the characteristics of the great and the worst GSIs?

The Student Relationship

- Communication is critical
 - bCourses
 - Adobe Connect
 - Skype
 - Google Hangout
 - Be aware when to respond to a single student vs. the entire class
- Connecting with students
- Organize bCourses information
- Be careful about “us vs. the professor”
- Understand where they are having difficulties

Traits of Popular / Unpopular GSIs

Most Frequent Complaints by Students:

- Not enthusiastic about teaching
- Totally unorganized/no structure/no roadmap
- Lack of examples and real applications
- Rehashing course / problem set materials
- Presentation (e.g. Talking to himself / herself in sections)
- Unaware of students not understanding the materials

Discussion Sections

- What you do depends on the professor
- Going over problem sets: usually low attendance and unhappy students - challenge the professor if he/she just wants problem sets
- Last year's exam problems
- Often diverse desires from those who attend

Discussion Section Logistics

- Undergrad classes have scheduled sections
- Other programs typically do not
 - Use Adobe Connect
 - Schedule sections on your own
 - Schedule exam reviews
 - Accommodate schedules as best you can
 - Set them up as far in advance as possible
 - Get rooms on campus when it makes sense

Section Preparation

- Before Semester Begins
 - Design the section activities to meet the objectives set by the instructor
 - If possible, get your hands on past course section materials
- Prepare well for each section
 - Start preparing EARLY on
 - Know what was covered in class
 - Make a plan, with time allocation
 - Try to be consistent week to week in what you do
 - Think through how to explain things
 - Board plans
 - Examples

Section Preparation

- Upload materials on course website/bCourses
- Send out prep/reminder e-mails when appropriate
- Before conducting the section, run through a script
 - Even if you've taught the section before
 - Teaching is like telling a story (each idea leads to the next, which follows from what came before.)

During the Section

- While delivering the content, make sure you connect with the students.
 - **How to make sure the students are following ?**
 - Make eye contacts
 - Find a “canary”
 - **How to keep the students with you?**
 - Don't ask “Any questions?”
 - Instead, ask “That was an important point, do you want me to say it again?”, “That was a lot of steps, should I go through them again?”, etc.
 - **Other tips on interacting with students**
 - Empathy (especially with undergrads)
 - Consistency (Don't treat students differently; avoid the appearance of partiality)

During the Section

- What to do when you mess up?
 - Accept that you will inevitably mess up at some point
 - Don't bluff
 - Figure out where you went wrong and explain it, on the spot if you can, after the fact via email or handout if you can't
- How to deal with English not being your native language
 - Pay particular attention to whether the students are following
 - Be particularly sure you understand their questions
 - Have neat board plans and practice
 - Again, eye contact helps
- In addition to delivering the section content,
 - Get feedback, and relay to professor as needed
 - Communicate status
 - Let failing students know that they need to improve

Grading & Assignments

- Coordinate the grading among all those grading
- How to deal with grading discrepancies
- Return assignments in an ethical way
- bCourses SpeedGrader

Grading

- Maintain consistency between papers
 - Randomly select and scan ~20% of the exams before grading
 - “Grade Bins”
 - Space out grading over time (20 per sitting?)
 - Grade anonymously whenever possible
 - Do NOT watch TV while grading!
- Make a “grading key” which accounts for every point
 - Saves time later when arguing about grades
 - Have a re-grade policy (even if only internal)
- Grading class participation can be difficult sometimes
 - Sometimes the instructor will ask you to give participation grades
 - How to measure and record participation grades?
 - Make this policy clear the first day of class

Evaluations

- Evaluations are Important:
 - Evaluations can affect rehire decisions
 - If evaluation scores are too low you'll need to undergo a rehabilitation plan approved by the Dean's office
 - Valuable feedback for future teaching improvements
 - Important to Haas rankings among b-schools
- Use mid semester evaluations (when possible)
- Use office hours as a chance for getting informal feedback

Teaching: Where To Get Help

- Head GSI
 - wgsi@haas.berkeley.edu
 - Campus GSI Center
 - <http://gsi.berkeley.edu/resources/index.html>
- “The Torch or the Firehose”
 - <http://web.mit.edu/tll/teaching-materials/torch-hose.html>
- Professor, students, other classes, other GSIs (the good ones!)

Teaching Issues

Let's talk through some potential scenarios and how you might handle them:

- I have no idea what to teach and discussion is tomorrow!
- I have no idea what the professor covered in lecture!
- I made a BIG mistake in explaining a key concept!
- I COMPLETELY contradicted the professor!
- A few of my students require endless handholding!
- Do I teach to the smartest or slowest students?
- My sections only have three students show up!
- My students are the stupidest and laziest on earth!

Conclusion

- Being a GSI is both a tremendous amount of work and also highly rewarding!
- Don't do it if you're not willing to give it your all.