

Department of American Studies TA Assignment Procedure (November 2015)

The Director of Graduate Studies works out the TA assignments in coordination with the Associate Chair (who develops the course schedule) and Department Manager or Administrative Services Coordinator (who issues TA contracts).

Goals:

- To provide students with apprenticeship opportunities in teaching, digital humanities, and other career skills with master teachers and experts in other aspects of our field.
- To support the department's undergraduate teaching mission by providing professors with assistance
 - in teaching courses in which students receive ample advice and feedback on assignments,
 - in preparing digital humanities projects for their courses, and
 - in maintaining the departmental website essential to informing students about courses, supplementary activities, and career opportunities in American Studies.

Considerations in deciding which student is assigned to TA for which course/ professor:

- Benefit to student of the assignment (working with a particular professor, having experience with particular subject matter, teaching sections, serving as professor of record, working in Digital Innovation Lab, etc.)
- Professor's preferences
- Student expertise (knowledge of subject matter, expertise in digital humanities, training in ethnographic methods, etc.)
- Student's preferences and prior TA assignments (those who have previously accepted especially demanding assignments or assignments of less immediate benefit to themselves get higher priority for their top choices)
- No conflict with courses student needs/plans to take that semester
- As much as possible, Folklore MA students TA for Folklore courses, including smaller ethnographic intensive courses, American Studies PhD students TA for American Studies courses.

Procedure/Timeline

- DGS and Associate Chair collaborate before the semester course list is finalized in order to match the number of TAs needed with the number of American Studies and Folklore graduate students requiring a TA-ship.
- Associate Chair publishes list of courses for upcoming semester (March/October).
- DGS solicits faculty preferences (April/November)
- DGS solicits student course schedules and TA preferences once students have signed up for courses (May-June/November) (Difficulty of incoming graduate students in finalizing their course schedules produces a summer bottleneck.)

- DGS works out matches, taking all of the above into consideration.
- DGS announces TA assignments (ideally July/November), providing explanations to faculty members or students who receive an assignment they did not request/expect.
- At this point, especially in the summer, something unexpected—student being offered a TA-ship or fellowship elsewhere; faculty member receiving a leave, course enrollment larger or smaller than expected, etc.—will disrupt the original plan and require some reassignments.
- Department Manager issues TA contracts (July/December).
- As soon as the period in which students may add courses is over (August/January, beginning of second week of semester) DGS will check enrollments and may adjust TA assignments, in consultation with professors and TAs affected and Associate Chair, DUS, and/or Chair as necessary.

Mutual Expectations:

- Professors may ask TAs to perform or assist with any reasonable task related to the course (see TA Conditions of Appointment document). On occasion the professor may ask a TA to assist with preparation of a future course, but only if these additional duties do not exceed their contract hours.
- TAs should work on average no more than 15 hours per week, including time spent attending lecture, reading course materials, preparing to teach sections, holding office hours, advising, grading, etc., with the understanding that they will spend more hours some weeks, fewer others. If TA responsibilities exceed this time and interfere with the student's ability to complete his/her coursework or make progress on his/her thesis or dissertation, the professor should make adjustments, including taking on more of the grading and advising him/herself.
- Occasionally students may (with the professor's permission) TA for and simultaneously take a 400 to 600-level course. In these instances the TA only grades work of undergraduate students and the time s/he spends reading and preparing for the course and attending class does not count as part of the TA's 15 hours per week.