

Making the Difference:
A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching Assistants



Johns Hopkins University

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INTRODUCTION

Whatever your reasons for becoming a teaching assistant at Hopkins, there are doubtless many questions that you will have as you approach the first day of class. We have designed this handbook and an accompanying website, www.cer.jhu.edu/TAttraining, to help you succeed in making the transition from student to teacher.

This book cannot tell you exactly how to become a good teacher—there is no one right way. All new teaching assistants are bound to run into many different situations, depending on their experience, the demands of their departments, and the particular students gathered in their classroom. This handbook does address the basics of teaching, as well as the boundaries and expectations of the teaching assistant position at Hopkins. It is our hope that this manual and website can serve as a quick reference guide to answer some of your questions, provide some suggestions and examples, and direct you to the many resources available to TAs on this campus.

Hopkins is a unique place. The teaching environment you will be entering is that of a small school that conducts big research. A significant number of undergraduates report feeling overwhelmed by their workload, and characterize some professors as distant or unapproachable. This is where your contributions become important to the undergraduates.

As a TA, you will play a variety of roles, from mentor to confidant to disciplinary officer. You will need to bring classroom ideas and research together for the students and provide the personal contact that may only be available to them in your smaller sections and labs.

We've tried to cover some of the most important aspects of what TAs do at Hopkins and address some of the most frequently asked questions. Now it's your turn to start tackling these issues. To start, we suggest that you skim through this handbook. As each TA's experiences and challenges will be different, it is likely that not all of the sections will apply to your particular situation. Reread the sections that seem most useful for the teaching that you will be doing at Hopkins.

The Center for Educational Resources (CER) has posted a copy of this manual (with active hyperlinks) along with other materials you might find helpful on the CER's TA training website (www.cer.jhu.edu/TAttraining). These materials include links to other teaching resources and videos of TA training sessions and orientations for you to draw upon whenever you need reassurance or ideas on how to deal with students in the classroom. This manual also has large outside margins so that you can take notes or update any information that may change over the course of the next year. The CER, the Graduate Representative Organization, and Hopkins are making TA training a priority, and we urge you to take advantage of the resources offered to TAs.

We hope that we can provide you with some information to improve both your experiences as a new teacher and the learning experiences of your undergraduate students. Teaching can be a rewarding experience if you choose to make it one. Successful teaching depends upon your attitude. Remember that you are not alone in this experience; you have plenty of resources at Hopkins, beginning with this handbook and website. Draw on the experiences of others by talking with your professors, your peers, and even your students. If you can maintain the idea that you, your professors, and your students are all working toward the common goal of exploring new ideas, you will do well.

QUICK START GUIDE

BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING ASSISTANT AT JOHNS HOPKINS: COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM NEW INSTRUCTORS

Q. What do I do on the first day?

A. *The first day is just like any first meeting – you want to make eye contact!* Begin to learn the names of your students by making a seating chart. Go around the room and ask students to introduce themselves. Use index cards to record their names, email addresses, majors, major advisors or fields of interest. Introduce yourself and write your name, office hours, and email address on the board. Specify when students may call you, if at all. Otherwise, do not give out your telephone number. Specify when you do NOT answer email. You set the rules; take charge. Distribute the syllabus and answer any questions. Explain your grading and late policies.

If you want to be creative, you may lead a low-key classroom activity that introduces and engages the main themes of the course. You may want to show a movie clip that addresses the course's prominent themes and ask the students to discuss the film's interpretation. You may distribute a short reading excerpt and introduce students to basic analytical skills. Such activities will give you an early sense of the experience and skill level of your students.

Q. How do I make students more attentive?

A. *By paying attention to them as individuals.* If possible, learn their names by the second time you meet. This requires some planning and memorization, but it is an extremely good investment. It sends the message that you care about them, and that they are accountable to you, their teacher.

Also, listen to them. Seek to understand their questions and concerns in class, and sometimes allow their contributions and statements to motivate class discussions and activities rather than adhering to a set, inflexible class plan. Be flexible.

Q. How do I get students to participate?

A. *Encourage participation by explaining your expectations.* Explain that both good answers and good questions "count" as participation. Explain that a certain portion of the course grade depends on class participation. It is useful to put these expectations in writing, in a handout, the first or second time you meet. When the class is quiet, it can be helpful to ask a specific student, by name, for an answer to a direct question.

Make it clear that the class environment is an interactive environment that requires widespread involvement. Do not allow negative trends to develop (such as a few students dominating discussion, or a fully silent section), or students will adapt to these situations and make it more difficult for you to change the dynamics later in the semester. Establish the setting you want within the first few sections.

Q. How do I get students to stop talking?

A. *Create silence.* When they find they are the only ones talking during lectures, they will stop. If they continue to distract you, call them to your office and warn them that they are being unfair to the other students. If the problem persists, speak with the professor, and you may ask the students to leave the class.

Q. What if a student doesn't show up to class?

A. *Students have lives outside the classroom.* The student may fall ill, drop the course, or change sections due to scheduling problems. If you learn students' names quickly, you can contact them and remind them that attendance is expected or mandatory and will figure into their progress in the course. But first ask the student if there is anything wrong. You should notify the professor and Academic Advising if a student is persistently absent from your class.

Q. What if a student's behavior is erratic, disruptive, or withdrawn?

A. *Notify the professor in writing,* and ask the student to see you during office hours. If for any reason you are uncomfortable seeing the student alone, ask another TA or the professor to meet with you, or meet in a public place. You should always notify the professor and Academic Advising if you feel overwhelmed or confused as to the nature of the problem.

Q. How do I motivate students to submit their work on time?

A. *Make the rules clear in writing.* Explain to them that you need time to read their work. Reciprocate by returning assignments within two weeks or less. Inform them of the consequences for handing in late assignments. Establish rules that are appropriate for your discipline. Most importantly, follow through and reinforce your rules.

Students like to test their instructors. If you allow a few late assignments, students will increasingly fail to meet deadlines.

TA TIP

"If you ever make a one-on-one arrangement with a student, PUT IT IN WRITING! All you need to do is to email the terms of the arrangement to the student, prefacing the email with phrases like "Just to be clear," or "Just to reiterate." If you fail to do this, the student will invariably change the terms of the agreement, claiming that he or she misunderstood."

Craig Hollander, History

Q. How do I give students criticism?

A. *Always start with some encouragement:* "You have some fine ideas here. To bring them out more clearly, you need to pay greater attention to your sentence structure." Or, "I think you see where this experiment is going, but let's go back to your technique, so we can see what went wrong." Be specific. Students need to know exactly what they are doing correctly and what they need to improve. And do not simply tear student work apart—help them build on their mistakes and find a new direction for their work.

Q. How do I deal with cultural and gender differences?

A. *Get to know students as individuals*, not as members of a racial, gender, or ethnic group. Find out their interests, and their strengths and weaknesses, and respond to these attributes. Avoid showing favoritism or personal dislike. Avoid adopting stereotypes and assumptions about students.

Q. Are there any tricks to staying well-organized?

A. *Write things down*, and keep them in one place. Return phone calls and email promptly, i.e., within 24 business hours. Keep an appointment book, and use it. At the end of the day or working session, write down two or three things to do when you begin again. Get enough sleep, food, and exercise. Be careful to take accurate attendance and to record when assignments are submitted.

Q. How do I set limits on my relationships with students?

A. Make it clear at the outset that you are their teacher, not their parent, their friend, or their servant. Tell them when and how they may contact you, and politely remind those who trespass on your private life of your availability. Then make sure that you are responsive during the times you have made yourself accessible. If a student becomes too familiar or casual for your comfort, resort to calling the student by his or her full name, and correspond in writing. If a student appears scared to talk with you, try relaxing formalities just a bit. Many new TAs find it useful to have students use more formal address: Ms. Keeler or Mr. Lee, rather than first names. Make sure they know your name; write it on the board the first few times you meet with them. If you dress in a more businesslike manner than is the rule for graduate students, you may help students to define you as the instructor.

YOUR ROLE AS A TEACHING ASSISTANT

YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SEMESTER

Before you start the semester, consider two things: advance preparation for the work of teaching the section or course, and what it is that you want to get out of teaching it. In terms of workload, be realistic about how much time it will take to prepare for class, to run lab sessions, or to correct thirty ten-page papers on the War of 1812. Talk to TAs who have worked on this class before you, to get a sense of what advance preparation is required. In terms of your own expectations, decide what you want to get out of teaching, and what you want to share with your students. A passion for learning is the most important thing to give them, but you may have other goals, such as improving their writing or teaching particular concepts. Thinking in advance about what you want them to take away will help guide your preparations.

STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF YOU

Students expect clear lectures, defined goals, relevant feedback, and plenty of access to you, the TA. The following are some tips for meeting these expectations.

What's the Point? Informing students of the objectives of learning particular material can help to connect the subject matter to students' interests, making the semester more productive for all of you. Address this question not once, but as often as relevant – even every week.

Be Prepared! Obtain personal copies of all course readings before the course begins. Ask the professor or department administrative assistant if desk copies have been ordered. If the publisher does not provide free copies, purchase a copy from the bookstore on the department account. Also, you should check into the availability of required readings in the bookstore and at the reserve desk in the library (MSE). You may want to ask the professor if he or she requires certain materials to be placed on reserve.

It is always good policy to prepare several classes in advance, in case you misjudge how much material you'll have time to cover. Having extra material ready will help you to overcome anxiety and establish your own self-confidence. You may not need it, but you'll have it ready. Plan discussion topics that are both engaging and relevant to the course.

Read the Undergraduate Student Handbook, the rulebook for undergraduates, for information pertaining to such subjects as add/drop deadlines and the deadline for filing Incompletes.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

www.advising.jhu.edu

Be Enthusiastic! Students want someone who engages with the subject matter and makes it relevant to them. Share what you find fascinating in the course material, such as personal or historic anecdotes on the subject, or biographical information about the persons being studied. Share online videos or images with them. Consider what drew you to the field, and share that enthusiasm with the class.

Encourage Class Participation You can elicit participation from students in many ways. Making participation part of the grade can leverage your requests for input. Calling on students by name can be an effective way to draw out some quiet ones, but it can embarrass others. Find some merit in every response: acknowledge that the student has participated. You can also offer a way out by letting students pass when you call on them.

Don't Try to Be Their Friend Some new TAs worry about what their students will think of them. Don't get caught up in this; don't try to be overly friendly with the students, or to come across as cool. It is not your job to be liked. You are there to be their instructor, and sometimes that means having expectations that may not be popular with your students. Fairness and dedication to the subject will win the students over more than any attempts to fit in with them.

PROFESSORS' EXPECTATIONS OF YOU

Start the semester with a clear understanding of what the professor expects of you, ideally with an in-person meeting. Plan to meet with him or her on a regular basis throughout the semester. Be sure you know what your role is from the beginning. Don't be afraid to ask for help, at any point, if you ever feel that you need more guidance or are unclear on a professor's policy. Professors sometimes get overwhelmed with email or responsibilities, but if you need answers to a question about teaching, it is your job to persist until you get it. Find out the best way to contact the professor if you need to reach him or her quickly. Befriend other faculty members or department staff as well, so that you have other people you can talk to about the class if necessary.

At your initial meeting, make sure that you understand the professor's goals for the course and your responsibilities as a TA, including how much time you are expected to commit to the work and how much freedom you will have in shaping your section or lab. Don't forget to clarify administrative details, such as grading and attendance policies. You need to know if the professor has strong feelings on whether an average paper gets a "C" or a "B." You should also agree on the number of office hours you will hold per week and on administrative policies, such as penalties for tardiness to class and late papers. If there are several sections in the course, meet with the other TAs to coordinate policies.

It is particularly important to clarify how to handle student complaints. One potentially contentious area is ethics. Be sure to discuss issues of academic integrity with the course instructor and other TAs before the first day. By taking a firm stand on ethics, you ensure equal opportunities for all students. For more information on how to deal with ethics violations, see the chapter on "Ethics and University Policies," p. 57.

Often, what students want most is to be heard, and you are much more accessible than the professor. If an issue arises, be sure to share it with the professor. Know the professor's availability.

UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Some departments find it necessary to hire undergraduate teaching assistants to fulfill all their teaching positions. In addition, undergraduate TAs may co-teach with graduate TAs in some courses. Note that the university policy is that undergraduates should not be involved in grading in any course in which they are a TA.

PREPARING FOR CLASS

Being a teaching assistant can be time-consuming, but it doesn't have to overwhelm you. This section offers some ideas about fitting TA duties into a busy schedule.

BUDGETING YOUR TIME

Plan Ahead Before a course begins, sit down with the professor and set clear expectations for the term. (See "Professors' Expectations of You," p. 14.) With a TA's job, as with any job, there should be clear and mutually understood expectations.

Contact Previous TAs In some classes, the TAs are responsible for much of the administrative work, such as putting books on reserve, making copies, or reserving audiovisual equipment. To anticipate the amount of time that a particular course might require, talk to students who have previously taught for the course or professor.

Schedule Your Week Make a concrete plan of action. Create a list of everything you need to do in the coming week. Estimate how long each activity will take. Be sure to plan into your schedule adequate time to prepare for class, especially reading the materials.

Prioritize the list and arrange tasks into the time you have available. Schedule high-priority items and fit lower-priority items into leftover blocks of time.

With the plan of the week in front of you, try to tighten up your schedule to eliminate dead time. For example, consolidate time on campus by scheduling your office hours immediately after lecture or section.

SETTING LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Regardless of the course, you will have a multitude of objectives to meet throughout the semester. You must learn to prioritize, or you will misuse valuable time, energy, and resources.

Broad course goals state what topics or issues will be addressed, but they do not clarify what students should have learned from the course. This is why it is essential for you as a TA to specify or clarify learning objectives for your course.

TEACHING TIP

You should consider distributing a list of objectives, perhaps within your syllabus, to your students at the start of the semester or a course section. This list will give students a sense of what is expected of them and will help them direct their efforts in navigating through the course. You may also include objectives on assignment sheets, so students know what is expected for each assignment.

Developing Learning Objectives Taking the opportunity to clearly convey objectives will prove helpful in generating exams, assignments, or other evaluation tools for your course. All well-written objectives should include the following:

- A clear explanation of what the student should learn or accomplish.
- A statement of the circumstances in which the student should be able to know or accomplish a given goal. Circumstances illustrate the instructional resources offered to students throughout the course.
- A statement of the measures that will be used to assess the material that has been learned or accomplished. You must also clearly convey how well the student should perform on a given evaluation in order to establish a minimum acceptable level of performance for accomplishing your objectives.
- In addition to curriculum objectives, which encompass the course material you expect students to learn, you should also develop objectives outside the curriculum, such as certain computer, reference skills, or interpersonal collaborative skills.

Clearly conveying your expectations of students will allow for more time spent on meeting your objectives.

WRITING A SYLLABUS

Many professors will already have a syllabus for their course; however, you may have to draft one yourself. The following is a checklist to help guide you.

Logistics Include the names and contact information of the professors and TAs along with the location and times of lectures, labs, or sections.

Contact Information Let the students know the best way and time to get in touch with you.

Learning Objectives You or the professor should review these in the first class, but they should be included in the syllabus so that students can link their work and the lectures to overarching goals or themes.

Prerequisites Be sure students are aware of any previous knowledge they need or courses they should have completed before enrolling in the course. If they somehow enrolled with insufficient background, be ready to point your students to resources where they can augment their knowledge on their own. Be clear on the professor's policy on admitting students without prerequisites, and refer any ambiguous cases to him or her.

Assignments and Readings In addition to the weekly assignments, tell students where they can find the required reading, such as in the Bookstore, the library, electronic reserves, a course packet, or a course website. Be clear about when assignments and readings are due. State whether readings are due before or after each class. Also, be clear on how assignments are to be turned in, whether in class, over Blackboard, or by email.

Grades Outline how students will be evaluated and what papers or exams they will have to complete. Describe these tasks, how they will be graded, and how much each is worth as part of the overall course grade. Review and enforce the professor's policy on grade appeals.

Course Policies Include clear policies concerning attendance, late assignments, or any other rules in the syllabus. Consider making the last page of the syllabus a contract that students must sign and return to you, saying they have read and understood the syllabus and agree to comply with all policies.

University Policies Include University statements on ethics, diversity, and inclusion (refer to pg. 57). Also include a statement on accommodations for students with disabilities (refer to pg. 59). Include the policy on plagiarism as well.

Resources If your students require any additional resources, or assistance such as tutoring or counseling, list the appropriate offices and contact information. You can find information about these resources in this manual (see “Additional Teaching Resources,” p. 43).

PREPARING LECTURE OUTLINES

Depending on the course in which you are a TA, you may or may not have to prepare lecture outlines. If you do, the following are some tips to get you started. Remember, if you are unsure or uninspired, talk to the professor or last year’s TAs.

Set Objectives Make a list of what needs to be accomplished in the section hour. This should be driven and refined by the course syllabus (see section on “Setting Learning Objectives,” p. 15).

Develop a Lesson Plan Prioritize the items on your list of objectives. Then chart the basic flow of the ideas to be covered in the section, including time for questions and discussion.

Include “Soft Time” Build flexibility into your section schedule. This is particularly important at the beginning, when you are still trying to figure out how much material you need to fill a section hour. Don’t try to cram too much material into one section, but also have backup material prepared in case the class finishes early. Sections have different personalities, and some may move more quickly than others. This is normal.

Practice If you are overseeing a lab, run through it ahead of time. If you plan to give a lecture or explain a particular concept at length, practice it once at home to time yourself. You will be surprised how different the material sounds and how much longer it takes when you say it aloud. Always speak more slowly than you think is necessary – you don’t want to rush through the material.

IN THE CLASSROOM

THE FIRST DAY

The first class provides a good opportunity to set the tone for the semester. The following are some pointers that can help you get the semester off on the right foot.

BEFORE THE FIRST CLASS

Make a handout with your name, the course name and number, and your contact information (phone, email, campus address, office location, and office hours). Include administrative details, such as late penalties and grading criteria, even if they are on the course syllabus.

Get to the room at least fifteen minutes early to address any unforeseen problems, arrange chairs, organize notes and papers, and write announcements on the board. Make sure that you and your classroom are equipped with the appropriate equipment to conduct your instructional activities. This includes making sure that all electronic equipment is operating properly and that your own laptop and portable devices are compatible with the devices in the room. If necessary, visit the classroom before the start of classes to ensure technology compatibility. Make sure you keep handy the contact information of technical support of your classroom building should any problems arise.

TEACHING TIP

Outside of good preparation, the most important thing you can do is believe in yourself. Remember, in the classroom, you are the expert!

CLASSROOM SUPPORT

Contact: Fred Thomsen
thomsen@jhu.edu
410-516-6198

AT THE FIRST CLASS

Use the first class to get to know students and to introduce yourself to them. Let the class know what you study, how long you have been at Hopkins, and what your background or interest is in the subject of the course. Then turn the tables on them. Specify what you want to know and ask targeted questions, going around the room so that everyone speaks. For example, asking “How does this class relate to your personal interests and plans?” can elicit interesting answers from students.

Have information ready about assignments, tests, and grading prior to the first class. If you are teaching outside your area of expertise, you may feel some discomfort, but you do not need to share this with your students. Try to develop some background before your first section, and realize that, although you may not be teaching in your area of specialization, you have the general disciplinary skills that are essential to assisting and directing your students. If you are a nineteenth-century historian teaching early modern European history, you can still rely on your historical and scholarly training to help you give your students guidance.

TA TIP

“Always keep in mind that you are a better learner than your students. Even if you feel you are not fully grasping the difficulty of the reading assignments and the content of the lecture material that your instruction is meant to supplement, your students are light-years behind you. For me, this little reminder was particularly helpful when I was a TA for a Shakespeare course—a period that is far outside of my comfort zone—and I had to assist students with material and concepts that were as new to me as to them.”

Nick Bujak, English

What's Happening? Provide a thumbnail sketch of the broad goals of the course and what you hope to learn, along with your students, from studying these concepts. You will need to show students that you are well prepared and believe the course is significant enough to demand your energy and time.

What Are Your Expectations? Explain your criteria for classroom participation, assignments, and grading. . It is not enough to say that you expect students to be prepared for class—you have to spell out exactly what level of preparation you expect from them. Include information about issues such as late penalties, style requirements, and attendance. Make a handout that clearly defines the rules for working together on labs, homework assignments, problem sets, and papers, as well as studying for exams.

Finally, S-L-O-W DOWN! New teachers—especially on the first day!—have a tendency to rush through material, speeding through notes. Pause to elicit questions and reemphasize important points.

ESTABLISH A CLASSROOM CLIMATE

It is your responsibility to make sure that everyone in your class is afforded the same educational opportunities. Here are a few things you should keep in mind as you prepare to set the tone in your classroom:

Be Aware That You Have Power As a TA, you may often forget just how intimidating, even stifling, your authority can be. Though you may feel insecure, you have power over the students through your grading, knowledge, and expertise. Keep this in mind.

Be Clear About Your Role in Order to Avoid Misunderstandings Some undergraduates find it helpful for the TA to outline his or her role early in the semester, to clarify standards and expectations directly, preferably in writing. This can include whether you will read early drafts of papers and how far in advance you would want to see them. As a new TA, you may find yourself rewriting your students' written work, offering answers that they can figure out on their own, or listening to students tell stories to gain your sympathy and extend deadlines. If you find this happens frequently, you will need to go back and re-evaluate your role as a TA. It may be useful to review the objectives you have formulated for the course. Your job is to foster student learning of the course material, not to be a student or to do the students' work for them.

Learn Students' Names Use students' names as much as possible. Return homework individually. Check attendance. You can also ask students to fill out cards with their names and information so you have a complete class list that you can use to jog your memory. If you're terrible with names, take advantage of the student photos and background academic information that are available online in Registrar-provided course lists.

TA TIP

"I try to memorize each student's name as quickly as possible, and in one large class got their permission to take their pictures with them holding name cards in front of them so that I would have flashcard pictures to practice memorizing their names at home!"

Amy Breakwell, History

Listen to and Understand Your Students Often a student is satisfied just knowing that someone in power has listened or understood his or her concerns or opinions. Respecting students and addressing their concerns can build mutual respect that will carry over into the classroom. Here are some tips that can help you show students that you are respectful and care about them:

1. Establish eye contact with students, both individually and in groups.
2. Be mindful of students' body language. Slouching, fidgeting, sleeping, or chatting are indications that students are not paying attention, do not understand the material, or are bored. Rather than ignoring this body language, try changing your teaching strategy, or asking if there are any questions.

3. Avoid being condescending. Examples of outright authoritarianism and manipulation of students by TAs are relatively rare, but students may perceive an attitude of superiority on the part of many TAs.
4. Be aware of favoritism and fairness. If students are not coming to see you during office hours or seem uncomfortable speaking with you, ask why and make provisions to accommodate them. A more detailed discussion of favoritism and fairness in the classroom can be found in the “Ethics and University Policies” section of this manual (refer to p. 57).

TEACHING TIPS

Avoid having your back turned to students when you are giving lectures or using the blackboard.

You may want to establish rules for laptop use by students in your class. Some students tend to surf the web during lectures. However, you also need to consider that many students use laptops for note-taking.

Arranging the Classroom Seating is a crucial part of the classroom environment, and it can help foster or deter classroom activities. It is crucial that students are clearly within eye’s view of the blackboard and the instructor. You may also alternate seating arrangements to facilitate many types of interaction.

Soliciting Student Input Here are some tips to help you encourage as much student input as possible without allowing the class to stagnate or be dominated by a few vociferous students:

1. Avoid asking questions that single out students. The result may be humiliating for the student and embarrassing for you.
2. Be alert for ways to include reserved students in class activities.
3. Support students in pursuing and reasoning through their own ideas.
4. Don’t let discussions get out of control or become offensive.

TEACHING TIP

A healthy learning atmosphere is often a fluid one. Feel free to have students move their seating more than once throughout a class. For instance, you can have students move into a circle for discussion.

CONDUCT

ABSENCES

You are likely to run up against a number of students who do not attend class regularly. On the first day, indicate to students that you and the professor insist on attendance and that you do not condone lateness to class. Be specific about your late policies, and articulate clearly any penalties for lateness or tardiness. It’s better to prevent a problem entirely than to deal with it after it develops.

Of course, many students have legitimate excuses to explain their absences (e.g. serious illness, religious holiday, or death in the family). These reasons should be respected. In cases of excused absences, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the faculty and teaching assistants of upcoming holidays or events and to make arrangements to complete any missed assignments or exams.

DIFFICULT STUDENTS

Most TAs, sooner or later, will encounter the consummate obnoxious student. This student may do a number of things to bother you and disrupt class. Some students are rude to their classmates or to the TA; others simply like to monopolize class discussion. First, consult with the professor or other experienced TAs, since they may have tips to help you. Then, you might ask to see the offending student after class.

TAs should also use their authority to prevent any one student from antagonizing, interrupting, or confronting classmates. Keep the classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. Ensure that a lively debate does not become a personal battle. Even the subtlest sexist, racist, xenophobic, or homophobic comments should not be tolerated. If you think that such a comment was made out of naiveté, then correct the student gently; if the comment was made maliciously, use sterner methods to demonstrate unequivocally that such behavior is unacceptable.

ATTENTIVENESS IN THE CLASSROOM

Explain to students on the first day that you expect their undivided attention during class. Urge them to respect both you and their peers. Students occasionally disrupt class discussion by having separate conversations, giggling, passing notes, doing other work, or reading a newspaper. Do not tolerate or ignore this type of behavior.

LATE WORK

First and foremost, be sure you understand the professor's late assignments policy. The most important rule for any late policy is to establish it clearly before the course begins and to explain it explicitly, both in writing and verbally. Then stick to it.

WHAT AFFECTS THE CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE?

As a TA, you will find it helpful to be aware of the following common expectations that students bring to the classroom. Whether you choose to uphold these expectations or alter them, it is useful to address these three points. Keep in mind that many students may come from different cultural or educational backgrounds, and may not implicitly understand what you require.

I. Egalitarianism In the classroom, a high level of student participation is often expected and is calculated as part of the final grade. In other classroom situations, however, student questions and comments during class may be regarded as disrespectful interruptions. Be sure to acknowledge these distinctions and articulate your expectations for active student participation.

II. Individualism In a Hopkins classroom, many students expect individual attention and to be rewarded for independent thinking. Other faculty may prioritize group efforts over individuality and may reserve the highest praise for teamwork, cooperation, and emulation. Again, clarify your expectations.

III. Informality Students and TAs at Hopkins generally expect a casual relationship. In more formal educational systems, that is not always the case.

FIVE STEPS TO A BETTER CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

The following steps can help you establish an open and comfortable environment for all the students in your classroom:

- 1. Know Yourself** Where do your own values fall on the spectrum from egalitarian to hierarchical, from individualism to cooperation, from informal to formal?
- 2. Be Explicit About Your Expectations** Be clear about class dynamics. Do you like student participation? By what name should students call you? Student discomfort during section is often a result of not knowing what the TA expects.
- 3. Show Respect And Be Friendly** Treat all students with respect. Make eye contact to prevent any student from feeling invisible or alienated. Be aware, however, that prolonged eye contact can make some students uncomfortable.
- 4. Never Assume** Make a deliberate effort not to accept racial, national, or gender stereotypes. Believe in the capabilities of all of your students and challenge them all to work hard and do their best.
- 5. Get to Know Your Students** Encourage students to come to office hours, or schedule mandatory conferences. One-on-one, you can ask students about their educational backgrounds and preferred learning styles.

TEACHING METHODS

You cannot be all things for all people, but using a variety of teaching techniques will reach more students and also serve as a wake-up call to un-attentive students.

Foster Collaborative Inquiry Students retain more when they are active learners, forming questions—and answers—for themselves. Rather than telling them what questions they need to passively answer, create assignments—or class discussions—that require students to come up with the questions as well as the answers.

Encourage Individual Thought Require students to come to class with written questions. Ask questions that necessitate reflection and discussion rather than factual regurgitation. If a question only has one right answer, it may not be the best question with which to begin a discussion.

Provide Models of Good Work Students need models of good work to guide them. Take note when a student does something positive, and provide examples of what to emulate. You may also want to provide self-generated examples of what *not* to do.

Personalize Lessons Instead of giving every student or group the same assignment, have them choose topics of their own interest to explore, applying lessons learned from class.

Keep Course Material Fresh Whenever possible, try to incorporate current events or topics of interest to students in your discussion or assignments. Consider consulting with your MSE subject librarian to find out what new resources are available. You may also want to consider the use of new media sources, such as blogs or YouTube videos, when trying to explain topics related to the course. Do not be afraid to try new teaching techniques or resources in the classroom. At the same time, do not undercut the value of more traditional methods of learning.

TEACHING TIP

Make sure that, when you use current events or other topics, they are directly related or relevant to the course material. You do not want to get students so excited that they lose focus or steer off-topic.

Diagnose and Cure Frustration Students who are lost and discouraged may not know where to start. Build their confidence by providing opportunities to succeed in intervals, breaking down material into manageable parts.

Build a Solid Foundation Begin by asking some straightforward questions on the basic facts. Once the class has the facts, it can then build skills towards interpretation.

BASIC SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

Blackboards Use the board sections in a structured and orderly way. Use headings so that students, copying down what you write, will understand to what your notes refer. Remember not to talk while your back is turned. The ensuing pause gives students a chance to catch up with the lecture. Try to write clearly in a readable size. Walk to the back of the room after class and see what you can read, or ask during class if everyone can read what you wrote. Don't erase anything until all the boards are filled. Put important things in boxes or use colored chalk for emphasis.

TEACHING TIP

Group work can be an effective way to encourage students to interact with their peers and receive feedback on their ideas or writing. It can also allow shy students to come out of their shells. That said, group work can easily lose its focus if you do not provide a well-structured activity and clear expectations.

PowerPoint If you use PowerPoint offer hard copies in advance of the lecture so students don't spend the class transcribing slides. As with the blackboard, be clear. Keep the slides short, highlighting the salient facts, and avoid overly busy slides or ones with long quotes.

Time Management Basic rules: Come early, start on time, end on time, and leave late. By coming early, you are able to greet entering students and get prepared. By starting on time, you reward students' timeliness. By ending on time, you maintain sanity.

Office Hours Office hours are probably the most important opportunity for student-TA contact. Choose a quiet, comfortable, and accessible location, such as departmental lounges or campus cafes.

Write your office hours on the board for the first two or three sections and include them on your general handout. Let students know that they can schedule a special meeting if they can't make your hours. To encourage students, some TAs make one visit per term a class requirement. In all likelihood, though, visits will come in bunches. You can expect anxious students in your office before exams or as deadlines approach for assignments.

Office hours can also be an opportunity to discuss how students are dealing with issues. Keep a list of campus resources readily available so that you can refer students to programs that offer special assistance, such as assistance for ESL learners, tutoring, writing help, and counseling.

The E-Office One easy and effective way to stay in touch with students is through email. For many students it is a less intimidating channel of communication. Email might also save you some time commuting to campus to answer brief student questions.

Adobe Connect Another option you may want to explore to communicate with students outside the classroom is an online collaboration environment called Adobe Connect. You can learn more about this tool, which permits real-time audio and video communication and document sharing, through the Center for Educational Resources (www.cer.jhu.edu/resources.html#adobeconnect).

TEACHING TIPS

You may want to discuss it with the instructor before you consider distributing hard copies of PowerPoint slides. Some instructors prefer to make copies available after class in order to encourage attendance or prevent students from not paying attention. Other faculty prohibit copies of slides altogether to prevent them from being passed on to potential students in the future.

It is likely that you will share your office with at least one other TA, so it is advisable for the two of you to arrange non-conflicting office hours. Or if you are not fortunate enough to have an office, try to avoid scheduling office hours at campus cafes during busy times of day, or you may have trouble finding a table. Avoid lunchtime and the morning coffee rush.

If possible, try to avoid using your personal email to accept student submission of assignments, as they may overflow your inbox and prevent further submissions from reaching you. Using email for this purpose may also create an opportunity for students to use technical malfunctions (i.e., forgetting to add attachments) as an excuse for late submissions or failing to turn in the assignment. Try creating a separate email account for the course, or better yet, set up a Blackboard site or a JShare account.

DEALING WITH CONCERNS OR EMERGENCIES

Most of the time, your classroom will be filled with healthy students whose biggest concern is what is going to be on the next test. However, as a TA, you should be aware of how to handle certain emergency situations. In this section, we give an overview of how to handle medical emergencies, concerns about the health and safety of your students, and unsafe classroom environments.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES IN THE CLASSROOM

If a student in your class has a medical condition for which your assistance might be necessary, they are instructed to bring you a letter at the beginning of the semester that outlines how to handle an emergency situation. For example, if a student has an allergy and must carry an EpiPen, they will most likely inform

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS	
Campus Security	410-516-7777
Emergency	911

you during the first week of class and will give you instructions on how to help if they are unable to take care of the situation themselves. However, sometimes students fail to notify you or have a medical emergency that arises out of the blue. If a student becomes seriously ill, faints, or has a seizure or any other type of medical emergency, you should immediately call campus security or 911. When calling 911 from a campus phone line, you will be directly routed to the campus security office which will dispatch security officers (all of whom have basic first aid training) as well as the Hopkins Emergency Response Organization (HERO) or Baltimore City emergency personnel.

CONCERNS ABOUT A STUDENT?

Your students might come to you with problems or concerns. Undergraduate students may feel more comfortable talking to you instead of the professor. Occasionally, they might come to you with problems that are bigger than grade changes or questions about class notes. If a student comes to you with a problem that you aren't sure how to handle, you can always talk to the instructor of the course for suggestions on what steps you should take. You can also contact any of the following people, who are happy to provide you with suggestions or take the steps to provide help to students in need.

RESOURCES FOR CONCERNED TAs		
Office of the Dean of Student Life: Mattin Center, Offit Bldg, Ste. 210		
Dean Terry Martinez	tmartinez@jhu.edu	410-516-8208
Academic Advising		
Krieger School of Arts and Sciences: Garland Hall, Ste. 3A		
Assistant Dean of Academic Advising James Fry	jfry6@jhu.edu	
Whiting School of Engineering: Shaffer 103		
Assistant Dean of Academic Advising Janet Weise	jweise@jhu.edu	410-516-8216
		410-516-7395
Counseling Center: 3003 North Charles St. S-200		
Director Michael Mond, Ph.D.	mond@jhu.edu	
Associate Director, Coordinator for Services to Graduate Students, Barbara Baum, Ph.D.	baum@jhu.edu	410-516-8278
Student Health & Wellness Center: 3003 North Charles St. N-200		
Director Alain Joffe, M.D., M.P.H.	ajoffe@jhu.edu	410-516-8270

IF SAFETY IN THE CLASSROOM IS COMPROMISED

Unfortunately, safety inside of the classroom is not always guaranteed. As a TA, you should try to be aware of the classroom climate and on the lookout for students who have issues that might escalate into an unsafe situation. Keep an eye out for warning signs, such as mood changes, challenges of authority, or conversations you may overhear that raise concerns.

Of course, there are not always warning signs, and you should know what to do if there are ever situations in the classroom in which your students' and your safety is compromised. In these situations, you should contact emergency personnel as quickly and as safely as possible.

When calling 911 from a campus phone, you will be directly routed to the campus security office, which will dispatch security officers as well as the appropriate emergency personnel. If you are calling from a cell phone, you should either call the campus security emergency phone number (410-516-7777) or 911 as soon as safely possible.

Calling campus security is optimal because they will immediately dispatch officers to your location as well as contact the appropriate authorities or emergency personnel. However, time is of the essence in these situations, and you should call whichever resource is easiest.

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS	
Campus Security	410-516-7777
Emergency	911

TIPS FOR SPECIFIC FIELDS

The roles of teaching assistants are as varied as the many academic departments that utilize TAs. We recommend that each TA find out exactly what is expected by his or her department and the class instructor. However, whatever your responsibilities may be, the following paragraphs offer advice on how to prepare for some of the major duties that you may encounter as a TA.

DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Discussion sections can take a number of forms. You may use the time in a physics class to go over problems, in an English class to analyze and discuss literature, or in a sociology class to explain and dissect theories. Regardless of the specific goals of your section, you will help students to improve their skills in writing, speaking, thinking critically and solving problems if you teach strategies that actively engage them in learning. One effective way of promoting active engagement is to provide students with opportunities to talk about what they are learning in the classroom through a discussion section. Discussions engage students, help the class to examine and clarify confusing concepts, and frequently raise valuable questions.

Goals of a Discussion Section

- Give students opportunities to apply lecture concepts.
- Allow students to cooperate and learn from each other.
- Increase students' sensitivity to other points of view and alternative explanations.
- Allow the TAs and instructor to gain feedback on how well the objectives of the course are being attained.
- Provide motivation for further learning.

TEACHING TIP

Remember that discussion isn't only about you communicating with your students; it is an opportunity for students to share ideas. Do not try to carry the entire discussion on your own.

Starting a Discussion

There are a number of techniques you can use to open up a discussion. Here are a few examples:

- Ask open-ended questions that get students thinking about relationships, applications and consequences.
- Show a short video or distribute a relevant newspaper article and ask for reactions.
- Provide questions that highlight important ideas in the next lecture to form the basis of the next class discussion.
- Have students write about an idea or question for a few minutes at the start of class.
- Have students bring in a few discussion questions of their own. Be clear that these questions should elicit class discussion rather than a basic recapitulation of lecture material.
- Assign questions or tasks for small groups to work out. This may help shy students feel less inhibited about contributing. Be careful to provide structure for these group activities, or they may lose focus. Circulate around the room to monitor activity.
- Ask for reactions to specific portions of assigned readings or lectures.

TEACHING TIP

Before you begin a discussion session, be mindful of how you carry yourself and communicate with others. Your responses to students, the attitudes you display, and the beliefs you convey all indicate to students the type of dealings they can anticipate.

Moderating a Discussion

As a TA, you may find discussion sections to be seriously misnamed—especially if they are filled with awkward and long moments of absolute silence as you face a room of blank stares. Because of the potential for awkwardness, some new TAs may wonder how there possibly can be enough to say to fill the discussion period. With some practice, you should be able to initiate a student-driven discussion that is merely guided by you.

Be Prepared

- Review the lectures and reading material prior to the section and, whenever possible, have written examples of the material for reference.

Be Respectful

- Avoid being condescending or acting like a know-it-all. Chastising students for wrong answers may stifle future discussion.
- Establish a comfortable, collaborative classroom atmosphere that encourages students to share ideas. Provide considered, reflective responses to student discussion, and respectfully correct or redirect students whose comments are misdirected or off-base.
- Avoid getting defensive or hostile when a student challenges your opinion or expertise. Remember that your students come from diverse backgrounds and not all of them will share your ideology. One good response to a challenge from a student might be “Good, I’m glad we’re hearing different opinions on this subject. Are there any others?” Welcome the disagreement: it can lead to a productive conversation.

TA TIP

“The best discussions are when students feel comfortable sharing their ideas and engage with the materials and one another, and my role is simply to clarify and steer the discussion in the most productive directions. I also like to have the class sit in a circle to facilitate and reinforce that they are talking to each other, not just to me.”

Katherine Reinhart, History of Science, Medicine and Technology

Stay On Topic

- Explain the topic of discussion in advance.
- Designate a certain amount of time to spend on each topic. However, you should leave yourself some flexibility in case the discussion gets good.
- Write key facts or information on the board as they are brought up, as visual reminders.
- Make concrete observations that tie comments back to the topic.

Ask Questions About Students’ Questions

- Rephrase students’ questions to make sure that you understand what they are asking.
- At the end, ask if you answered their question.

Wait for Answers

- A lull in the discussion could mean that the students need a moment to digest what they've heard.
- When you ask a question, wait for students to respond until it is clear that you are expecting an answer. If you run out of material before the end of class, ask your students if there are other topics they would like to discuss.

TEACHING TIPS

If a student is unclear about your response to his or her question, spend some time after class or during office hours going over the question. You do not want to waste valuable class time trying to answer the question of a single student.

If students still do not talk, don't be afraid to call on individual students. Students will come better prepared to engage in discussion if they know there is a chance they will have to speak in front of their peers.

If you plan on giving students assignments, make sure you get approval from the instructor and that the assignments are stated on the syllabus. You want to avoid changing expectations or creating unanticipated work in the middle of a semester.

Weekly Assignments

- Add short weekly assignments to ensure that students will do—and think about—the readings in preparation for discussion. You can ask students to write up discussion questions on the reading, to write a short paragraph about their position in relation to the reading, etc. You may want to ask them to email their assignments in advance of class, so you come to section aware of what interests your students.
- Assign one or two students each week to become a discussion leader or moderator. This puts some responsibility on students to guide discussion and may encourage participation by having students suggest the topics they feel are important or relevant.
- Have students bring to class a question on the weekly assignment, an answer to a question you posed the previous week, or a problem from the homework that they found challenging and would like to discuss.

Encourage Attendance and Participation

- Make sure that you are clear about attendance requirements from the very first day.
- Address any attendance problems with both the student and instructor.
- Encourage attendance and participation by including required assignments or presentations that will make up part of the final course grade.
- Stress the importance of class participation in the final grade to encourage reluctant students to speak up during class.
- Make it clear that mere attendance does not count as participation; students should not only show up but also thoughtfully contribute to class activities.

TA TIP

"Many classes require a participation score, which can be tricky to calculate. I've found it is helpful to keep careful track of attendance, as well as some specific notes on student participation throughout the semester. That way, at the end of the semester, you aren't just basing class participation on a gut feeling – and you have some backup in the event that a student disagrees with your assessment!"

Katie Gray, History

LECTURE COURSES

The central objective of a lecture is to communicate a set of concepts to an audience of undergraduates. In this section, we have attempted to outline several principles that successful lecturers tend to use.

Planning the Lectures

The lecture process begins long before class convenes. Thorough preparation and organization of ideas makes lecturing easier for both the lecturer and the audience.

Plan Without Over-Planning

- Unless you are delivering it to the entire lecture hall, don't write out a full transcript of your lecture.
- Practice giving the lecture without using your notes. This will ensure that your lectures are well organized.
- Work from notes, but try to devote most of your energy to presentation and engaging students.

TEACHING TIP

When practicing your lectures, do not forget to time them. This will ensure that your lecture does not go over the allotted time and that you have time for questions and discussion. A good rule of thumb is allowing at least 20 minutes for discussion and dealing with administrative issues.

Liven Up the Material

- Choose to focus on the particular aspects of the material that personally interest you.
- Intersperse the lecture with references to your own life, students' personal experiences, or concrete and current examples of the themes.
- Illustrate examples with diagrams, slides, images, videos, demonstrations, cartoons, case studies, or material from the Internet.

Delivering the Lectures

Being well prepared before your arrival to the lecture is half the journey. The other half is delivery – you must make sure that the time you spent in preparation is not wasted. Fortunately, there are some tools and tricks that can contribute to a more successful delivery of the material.

Preview and Review

- Start the lecture with an overview of what will follow.
- Emphasize how each lecture fits into the larger picture of the course as a whole.
- Display an outline. Refer to it as you move from point to point.
- Pause along the way to review what you have covered up to that point.

Know Your Voice

- Speak clearly, slowly, and loudly enough to be heard.
- Ask your students if they can hear you, if you are too fast, etc.
- Listen to your own voice for distracting speech patterns, such as repeatedly saying, "Um", "Uh-huh," or "You know," or using the same phrases frequently.
- Do not lower your voice towards the end of a thought.

Repeat Important Concepts

- When possible, try to employ phrases that suggest that the concepts about to be introduced are important. Write key phrases or themes on the board, or announce, “This is a key theme we’ll see repeatedly,” the first time it is introduced.
- If appropriate, you may also want to tell students whether a particular concept is important for an upcoming assignment or exam.

Acknowledge Your Weaknesses

- When a student asks a question to which you don’t know the answer, do not attempt to fake an answer or avoid the subject.
- Admit that you are not sure, promise to find the answer, and get back to the student and the class promptly.

Imitate Good Lecturers

- Take a minute to think about professors or TAs you’ve really liked, and assess what it was that made them effective lecturers.

LABORATORY SECTIONS

Teaching a lab section can be a truly enjoyable experience. In a lab, students are active participants in what they learn. Instead of merely absorbing knowledge, students have the opportunity to gain firsthand experience in a given scientific field. Laboratory work helps to animate abstract concepts and teach practical techniques. But, most importantly, labs teach students about the process of being a good scientist. This process includes everything from keeping a detailed lab notebook to working collaboratively.

First Day of Lab

You should realize that for many of your students, this might be their first lab class. Keep this in mind. Emphasize any important policies, such as “Lab notebooks must never leave this room,” or “Open flames are allowed only in the hood.” You may also want to hand out a sheet of your own design that details what you expect of students. This would include any policies on grading and attendance as well as suggestions about how to format their lab reports. Try to include a sample lab report for guidance, as many students will be unfamiliar with this style of writing.

Preparing for a Lab

Preparation is essential to running a lab smoothly. Being familiar with the experiment in principle is not enough. Ideally you should run the entire experiment from start to finish yourself before attempting to instruct anyone else in its finer points. When this is not possible, familiarize yourself with all of the equipment and make sure you know how to operate it. Read the lab manual thoroughly, and make sure you are prepared to explain any confusing concepts or procedures.

In some departments, the professor or head TA will demonstrate experiments before each class. This is extremely useful, but it is not always sufficient preparation. Try to set aside a specific time each week to prepare for the lab. Make a point of talking to TAs who have already taught the lab and find out what may give students difficulty. And remember that your students are invariably less efficient than experienced scientists.

Student Preparation

Students who have reviewed lecture notes and the lab manual will have a greater understanding of the day's experiment than those who come to lab unprepared. You may want to devise a way to ensure that students are familiar with the lab before they come to class. You could prepare a short quiz based on the techniques and concepts introduced in the lab manual, or request that students come to lab prepared with a statement of the experimental purpose and procedure.

Supervising the Experiment

Try to make contact with each student as the lab progresses and make sure that he or she is on the right track. As a lab TA, you will need to help students recover from experimental errors, but, at the same time, you should try to encourage independence. Inquire about the results of any intermediate steps. If they're way off, allow them some extra time to uncover the mistake on their own, but don't leave them floundering for too long. Feel free to give them gentle hints along the way.

Realize that you cannot help every student at once. Encourage your students to seek advice and compare results with each other when you are not available. You may even want to have students perform the experiment in small groups or pairs. In this way they can help each other learn the material, share equipment and good preparations, and answer each other's questions.

Safety in the Lab

Carelessness, lack of preparedness, and ignorance of safety procedures can be disastrous and can result in injuries to the students, or even to you. You should be aware of the safety guidelines and procedures at Johns Hopkins University in case of an accident. As the person in charge, you may be called upon to act reasonably and quickly in the case of a chemical spill, fire, explosion, ingestion of or contact with a toxic substance, or any other of a number of hazardous situations. You should be prepared for such situations and try to respond accordingly (after making sure the appropriate safety personnel is contacted).

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

First Aid/HERO	410-516-7777
Biosafety Officer	410-955-5918
Office of Safety and Environmental Health (OSEH)	410-516-8798
Maryland Poison Center	1-800-222-1222

When it comes to handling dangerous materials or equipment in lab, you should always assume that your students did not read the safety warnings in the lab manual. Point out how toxic materials should be carefully handled and how they should be disposed of properly. Inform students about dangerous combinations of chemicals and any dangerous lab practices. Demonstrate any potentially tricky techniques. Most importantly, give students instructions on how to deal with potential problems and how to contact campus safety and security. Don't forget to point out safety showers, eye wash stations, and fire extinguishers.

A detailed safety manual and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) is available from the Office of Safety and Environmental Health, which is located at 3100 Wyman Park Drive, Suite G04. Seminars on lab safety are offered periodically; see www.hopkinsmedicine.org/hse/training for more information. In case of an emergency of any kind, call campus security. They will, in turn, contact the appropriate emergency personnel and direct them to your location on campus.

“W” COURSES

The writing intensive requirement at Hopkins is as follows:

To encourage excellence in writing across disciplines, the University requires all undergraduates to take a number of writing-intensive (W) courses. The University defines a writing-intensive course as one in which students write at least 20 pages of finished writing over multiple assignments, usually three or more papers; instructors respond to students’ work in written comments or in conference, or both; and students have at least one opportunity to receive feedback on a draft and then revise. A writing-intensive course does more than assign writing; it guides students’ practice in writing and makes writing an integral part of the course.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT WRITING COURSES

Patricia Kain
Director of the Expository
Writing Program
Gilman Hall, Room 3
410-516-7545
kain@jhu.edu
krieger.jhu.edu/ewp/

In addition to the approaches outlined in this booklet, TAs who teach W courses are eligible to receive training at the CER’s TA orientation in September.

TEACHING A “W” COURSE

Sequence Writing Assignments

A W course should be designed around a coherent sequence of assignments that builds both content knowledge and writing skills at the same time. In such a sequence, each assignment builds on the ones before it, and pre-draft assignments, class discussions, and in-class workshops are designed to help students master the intellectual and rhetorical skills they will need to write their papers. Here are a few principles to keep in mind:

- **Work backward from your goals; create small assignments that develop the skills needed for the final assignment.**

What is the most advanced assignment of the course? Let’s say it is an 8-10 page argumentative essay based on both primary and secondary sources and that it asks students to enter a critical controversy and argue their own points of view. For this assignment, you must teach your students how to analyze a primary source, how to evaluate an argument, how to structure an essay, how to integrate and document sources, etc. Folded into these intellectual skills are other skills, such as summarizing and writing clear sentences. Your assignments should develop these skills individually, or in more limited assignments, before asking students to practice them simultaneously in the final assignment.

- **Start small, and break down assignments into smaller, more manageable parts.**

While students may be overwhelmed by a large and complex assignment, they can succeed when the task is broken down into manageable parts. If the final paper will be an 8-10 page argumentative essay, you may ask students in the first assignment to write a short analysis (graded or ungraded) of a single, primary source. Then, building on that initial assignment, and using a mix of graded and ungraded writing assignments, you can bring your students to the point where they can profitably take on that final paper. In rough outline, such a course sequence might look like this:

- Paper 1: analysis of a primary source, 1-2 pages (ungraded)
- Paper 2: analysis of a primary source, 3-5 pages (graded)
- Paper 3: evaluation of a secondary source in relation to a primary source, 5-7 pages (graded)
- Paper 4: argument using primary and secondary sources: enter a critical debate, 8-10 pages (graded)

- **Define your terms, and use examples.**

Don't assume students know what you mean by the words *summary*, *analysis*, *synthesis*, *argument*, or *report*. You must define the genre and its constituent elements. For instance, what do you mean by *thesis*? What constitutes *evidence* (this is both a disciplinary question and an assignment-specific question)? How does *structure* manifest itself? And what does it look like in a lab report, in a close analytical reading of a literary text, in an argument about a public policy issue? Define your terms, and provide concrete examples that show students what you think is good and what they are aiming for.

BRING WRITING INTO THE CLASSROOM

By asking students to write in class, you can begin to model for students the role that writing plays in your discipline. Here are a few suggestions:

- **At the beginning of class, ask students to write for three to five minutes on some aspect of the reading you will discuss that day.** You may simply ask students to respond to the reading (especially if the reading is provocative or troubling), or you may put a specific question on the board to help stimulate and focus discussion. For instance: What strikes them as the most puzzling (questionable, important) passage in the text? What do they see as the author's key claim, and why? Ask them to identify an important underlying assumption the author makes, or to name a particular point in the text with which they agree (or disagree), and briefly explain. How does this reading relate to (support, undermine) theory X that they discussed last week?

Brief in-class writing exercises help students focus on the subject, stimulate discussion, and promote writing as a means of thinking. You might try in-class writing exercises to get started, to switch gears in the middle of class, or to give students a chance to sum up their own thoughts at the end: what do they want to take away from class today? Such exercises are ungraded.

- **Another way to make writing part of students' in-class experience is to discuss the readings as writing.** How does the article/essay/argument/theory work as a piece of writing? What is the author's strategy for setting up the beginning, establishing context, letting readers know what's at stake? What are the author's sources of evidence, and how does he or she use them? How does the author handle transitions? Structure the essay? Anticipate counter-arguments? This approach won't work with all readings, but many theoretical and argumentative texts—secondary sources in general—can do double duty as models for the intellectual and rhetorical moves you want your students to practice. Also, by asking students to consider the work they're reading *as writing*, you engage students as fellow writers in the same scholarly enterprise.
- **Choose secondary readings with which students can engage analytically.** If a secondary reading is too sophisticated or difficult, or if students do not have access to the data on which it is based, students will be unable to grapple with the text in any meaningful way, and you will spend much of class time trying to explain what the text says rather than guiding students' evaluation of it.

- **Make students’ writing the subject of class activities.** When you assign writing, whether pre-draft assignments or complete papers, you can turn students’ writing into an important text by setting up a class workshop. If, for example, you ask students to summarize a text in one paragraph (a good pre-draft assignment for a synthesis or an analysis), you can read two or three of the summaries in class and consider, in a class discussion, how well they fulfill the criteria you established for a summary. Or you might put students in pairs and ask them to read each other’s summaries, again in terms of the established criteria. There are no grades on such pre-draft assignments; the dual aim is to help students get a clear grasp of the source and improve their writing.

You can arrange workshops for pre-draft assignments (paper proposals, tentative theses), parts of drafts (introductions, body paragraphs), or whole drafts. If you use whole drafts, students will need to read them ahead of time (they can email them to each other or post them on a class web site), but in any case, you will need to **establish clear guidelines**—both the specific purpose of the workshop and the logistics. Setting up such in-class workshops gives students the opportunity to receive constructive feedback from interested readers, teaches them that writing is a process involving revision, and takes their work seriously as writing meant for readers. Workshops also afford all participants the opportunity to see how fellow writers approached the same writing task and to practice their skills of textual analysis.

TA TIP

“If you’re teaching a writing-intensive course, it may be a good idea to establish a policy on the reading of drafts. To be fair to all students, I advise either limiting the number of drafts you will read for each assignment or the number of pages of the draft (for instance, the first two pages) you will read. You can also offer your office hours as the forum in which to discuss revisions. This policy will help to control your workload and will treat all students fairly by setting the same limits for all.”

Caroline Arden, Writing Seminars

RESPOND TO AND EVALUATE WRITTEN WORK

- **How You Respond Depends on the Goal of the Assignment**

When you respond to students’ writing—whether by email, in conference, or in written comments on their papers—**keep in mind the purpose of the assignment and what students are supposed to gain from it**. If the writing is a brief in-class exercise, the purpose may simply be to stimulate class discussion (see the section above), in which case the interaction with classmates’ ideas is both purpose and response. No further response from you is needed. If, on the other hand, the assignment is a pre-draft that asks students to summarize in a paragraph the main argument of one of the readings, students need to know whether they have provided an accurate account of the argument. If they have, that is all you need to say, though you might add a word of praise: “Good job. You get Levy’s main argument exactly.” If students miss the argument or only have part of it, say that, and send them back to the text—there’s no point in asking students to critique an argument if they don’t have a clear understanding of what the author is arguing.

- **Use Pre-Draft Writing Assignments to Keep Students on Track**

Pre-draft writing assignments are useful checkpoints for students and for you to make sure students are on the right track. If you ask students to develop a tentative thesis (or two), you can use their assignments in class to discuss what makes a good thesis for the paper in question, and you can comment on their individual assignments by making suggestions that will help strengthen their thinking and, when needed, send them in more fruitful directions. Responding to students’ writing is part of the ongoing dialogue of the course and an important means of teaching. It is also evaluative; your responses are guided by your judgment about what is working well, what isn’t, and how students might improve. Teaching in this way integrates the criteria for evaluating the final product into the process of producing the product.

- **Use Grades to Reinforce What Students Have Learned**

When students submit their papers to you for grading, the teaching continues. If you determine grades based on how well students fulfill the criteria for the assignment—the criteria you taught—then grades become more than vaguely positive or negative reinforcement; they become an important teaching tool, a means of reinforcing the specific lessons and writing values that you teach. Students may not like their grades, but they should understand them in the terms of the course. That means you should explain the grade (A-, B, C+) in a note that provides students with an analysis of both the strong points of the paper and the weak points of the paper, that is, what could be improved to lift it to a higher level.

Ideally, such an endnote should be typed, should address the student respectfully and by name, and should refer concretely to the paper. It's useful to number the paragraphs (or have students do it) so that you can refer to specific sections. For instance, if one of the best parts of a paper is the student's use of evidence in paragraphs 4-6, tell him or her that. You might also contrast that strong section with the weak use of evidence, or the lack of evidence, in paragraphs 7 & 8 so that the student can see, in the context of his or her own paper, where the use of evidence is effective and where it is not. In general, your endnote should:

- Evaluate the paper in the terms of the assignment
- Point to what the student did well
- Explain the weaknesses and the consequences of the weaknesses (why the failure to provide necessary background, for instance, undermines coherence)
- Consider how the student writer can improve

This last point regards the student as a writer whose learning and practice are not bounded by this single assignment, and it locates grading in the context of your teaching.

- **Tips on Writing Endnotes**

Take steps to make sure that you are fair to the entire class when writing endnotes. For instance, avoid spending so much time in the writing of one note that you neglect other students' work. You may also want to establish a grading time limit for writing endnotes on papers. You will need to modify this limit, of course, depending on the paper, the goal of the assignment, and the needs of the student. An endnote on a 2-3 page paper is going to take less time than a note on an 8-10 page paper that's worth a substantial percentage of a student's final grade. As a general rule of thumb, 20 to 40 minutes should be sufficient for the writing of most endnotes, and if you are going well over that on every paper, you may need to work faster.

Timing yourself as you write can help you avoid the situation of spending too much time on the first papers and not enough on the last ones. You might also try jotting notes to yourself on a separate piece of paper as you read so that you can more quickly determine the two or three main things you want to tell the student in your endnote. And, finally, if you get stuck on a paper, set it aside, go on to the others, and return to the problem paper later. Once you've read half of a set of papers, typical difficulties start to become clearer, and you can work more quickly.

THE ART OF PROBLEM SOLVING

Problem solving sections tend to be more interactive by their nature. The role of a TA in such sections also changes from one of being a sage, providing answers to students, to the role of a coach, teaching students how to find solutions on their own. TAs in problem solving sections need to be able to teach the approach to solving a problem. This may involve breaking down a problem into small parts, linking to previously covered topics, using proper terminology and nomenclature, and basically untangling the problem for the students. The attitude of the TA is key to running successful problem solving sections.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF PROBLEM SOLVING

DO

- prepare well.
- identify elements of problems and where potential pitfalls may lay for students.
- have material ready that is similar to homework problems.
- engage the class to take ownership of the work and encourage class participation.
- teach students how to think.
- design your boards well.
- design your explanations and introduce topics to students.
- be what you are – adapt your style for clarity.
- pay attention to the needs of your students.

DON'T

- lecture to the students.
- provide answers to your students.
- skip parts of explanations – what may be evident to you may not be for your students.
- rush through your explanations – check for student understanding at each step.
- try to hide errors – if you encounter a problem you cannot answer tell students you will look into it and get back to them at the next session.

EVALUATING YOUR STUDENTS AND YOUR TEACHING ABILITIES

PREPARING EXAMS AND PAPER TOPICS

An important part of successful teaching is successful questioning, and you will, at some point, be faced with this challenge. The evaluation and grading process entails much more than merely marking answers right or wrong. Homework, papers, and exams provide important feedback to students about their level of success through grades, comments, and suggestions. Similarly, they provide feedback to you about your effectiveness as a teacher. Here are some important ideas that you will need to keep in mind, no matter what type of exam you are writing:

Timing Be mindful of the amount of time a student will have to answer a question. For example, a carefully reasoned essay should take about 30 minutes to complete.

Administrative Details Establish both the format of the examinations and the grading criteria at the beginning of the semester.

Variety Attempt to rearrange the logic and the requirements of questions so that the general concepts remain the same, but the specific details or cases change each year.

Proofread Your Questions There is nothing worse than a question that students cannot muddle through because of typing errors, a confusing structure, or grammatical problems.

Take-Home Exams The take-home examination is a good format for seminar courses because it can test a high level of complexity and specificity. It is also a good option when the final exam accounts for a substantial portion of the course grade, because it allows students ample time to produce their best work.

ESSAY AND SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Designing Questions That Work

- Within each question, limit the number of sub-questions.
- Each question should attempt to get students to integrate two or three broad themes in the course.
- Play around with the format of questions: for example, combine short-answer questions or identifications with an essay-length question.
- Give students some options, such as choosing to answer one of two essay questions.

PAPERS

There is a substantive difference between assigning one large final paper and assigning a series of shorter papers over the course of the semester. The one-paper approach can be effective for advanced students. However, to ensure adequate guidance and progress throughout the semester, and as a check against plagiarism, you should require a sequence of steps along the way. For instance, you might ask students to turn in a research question or proposal, an annotated bibliography, a draft

beginning or a tentative thesis, a presentation on the research, or a draft before the final paper. The alternative approach is to assign shorter papers at first, either as sections of a longer paper or as separate assignments, which will allow for feedback throughout the semester. This approach helps students, in 100- and 200-level courses especially, to develop as writers within the context of your discipline.

DESIGNING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

- Decisions about how you will use writing in your course and how you will design writing assignments are determined by the discipline, the level, and the aims of the course. What do you want the writing assignments to accomplish? Work backward from your goals, and design your assignments to help students achieve those goals.
- Sequence your assignments, and start small. Whether you're teaching an introductory course or a more advanced course, you can profitably use a mix of ungraded and graded assignments to help students master the intellectual and rhetorical skills they will need to write the largest and most complex assignment of the course.
- If you provide a series of questions to help focus students' thinking, state explicitly that you do not expect students to answer *every* question but rather to formulate an arguable thesis in response to *some* of these questions. Otherwise, you may get papers that merely list answers to each question.
- For more information about writing assignments, see the section on "'W' Courses."

TRUE/FALSE AND MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Types of Questions and Reasoning True/false questions generally test facts and definitions, while multiple-choice questions can be used to test the correct use of facts, definitions, concepts, or abstract thinking. Both types should be used only when there is a clear "right" answer.

How to Write Questions

- Avoid qualifying terms like "may," "some," or "to a considerable degree."
- Do not create false statements from true statements through the use of negatives (e.g. "True or false: It is not the case that $X = Y$ "). Instead, use straightforward declaratives (e.g. "True or false: $X = Y$ ").
- Make an effort to be truly random in the pattern of correct answers. If a, b, c, and d are possible answers, have the letter of the right answer change from one question to the next.
- The answers (d), "all of the above," or (e), "none of the above," can be helpful if used sparingly.

GRADING

Grading is an important part of your teaching. When responding to students' written work and assigning grades, keep in mind the purpose of the assignment and what you want students to learn. Here are a few guidelines:

Grade What You Teach If you determine grades based on how well students fulfill the criteria for the assignment—the criteria you taught—then grades become an important teaching tool, a means of reinforcing the specific lessons and principles you teach. Students may not like their grades, but they should understand them in the terms of the course.

Be Consistent If you base grades on the criteria for the assignment, your grading will be clearer and more consistent. When you're grading papers, you can speed up the process and increase consistency by reading through several papers before commenting or assigning grades. This will help give you a sense of the papers as a group, of how they compare, and of what characterizes the stronger papers. After you finish grading (but before you finalize the grades), it's a good idea to double-check papers in the same grade range to make sure they are commensurate.

Respond In Writing Commenting in the margins of written work can help you track the work as you go, but be sparing with margin comments. (You might make notes for yourself on a separate sheet of paper, and then put only those comments in the margins that address important points.) Keep margin notes *in* the margins—don't write all over papers. Explain the grade in an end note that provides students with an analysis of both the strong points and the weak points of the paper. Make sure to mention what could be improved to elevate the grade to a higher level.

Keep Accurate Records Have a system, and maintain the security of your records. If attendance and participation are factors in final grades, for instance, make sure you record attendance at every class (not later). Record the submission of all homework and pre-draft assignments on the days you receive them. Also, if you ask students to submit an electronic version of their papers in addition to a hard copy, you will have an accurate record of when all papers were turned in. Retain your attendance and grade sheets after the course is over.

Stay Current With Grading The information you provide to students by responding to and evaluating their homework, pre-draft assignments, tests, and papers is an important part of your teaching. It helps you and students keep track of what they've learned and what they still have to learn. This information must keep pace with the course.

Have a Clear Policy on Re-grades If your course allows re-grades, put your policy in writing, in the syllabus, and make sure your grading criteria are clear (see above). If you find mistakes, correct them. If you're unsure of how to handle a grading problem, refer the student to the professor.

TA TIP

"When grading lengthy midterms, you may find it difficult to maintain a fair and consistent rubric, especially for written questions requiring students to form an interpretation of course material. Before you start, it will help to have a clear idea of what a good answer would be for each question. Then, before assigning any grades, read quickly through several of the tests to get an idea of the range of responses."

- Marsha Libina, History of Art

EVALUATING AND IMPROVING YOUR TEACHING SKILLS

- Don't punish honest criticism. To keep things on an impersonal basis, encourage students to keep written evaluations anonymous.
- Criticisms are not personal attacks. Put comments into a larger perspective—one that encompasses the performance of the professor, you, and the students.
- Show that you take evaluations seriously. The more you do this, the more likely you are to get thoughtful feedback.
- Get feedback throughout the semester. It can be very helpful to take the midterm exam, yourself, so that you can make adjustments as you go.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Students

If you encourage students to see you individually during a semester, you can use these meetings to ask them about your work, too. To help stimulate discussion, depersonalize your questions (e.g., “Was this assignment unclear? Why?”) You could also take a few moments during class to talk with all your students about how the course is going.

Anonymous written comments often allow students to be more free and thoughtful. If you want to write your own evaluation form, try asking questions that are both specific and open-ended, such as: “Were comments on papers or exams helpful?” “To what extent was the TA approachable?” or “Did the TA encourage participation? How?” Also, you might consider using one of the Mid-Semester Evaluation forms provided in the Appendices (p. 65).

Faculty and Peers

Form a Peer Review Group in which you each take turns sitting in on each other’s classes. Such processes provide relatively unbiased commentary on specific classroom practices and expose people to a variety of teaching styles and techniques. There is also a lot to be learned from faculty about teaching. Some faculty members make a habit of visiting TA discussion sections or labs and offering commentary. Being observed and evaluated by a faculty member can be more stressful than being observed by a peer, but the potential reward can be worth the trouble.

Self-Evaluations

Video and audio taping sections are two ways for you to see how others see you. Observing yourself can lead to some startling discoveries about how you interact with your students. Also, sit down and think about what the information you are gathering is telling you. If a discussion or lab goes particularly well or poorly, take some time to think about why—and what you could have done differently. If attendance or participation is low, try to get some feedback from students and make changes. Learning to teach is like learning anything else—it’s an ongoing process that requires constant effort.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING RESOURCES

CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

The CER staff are available to help you with any questions you have about teaching. The mission of the Center for Educational Resources (CER) is to partner with educators (both faculty and graduate student teaching assistants) to extend their instructional impact by connecting innovative teaching strategies and digital technologies. The CER is jointly sponsored by the Krieger School of Arts & Sciences, the Whiting School of Engineering, the Sheridan Libraries, and Hopkins Information Technology Services. CER staff offer a variety of services and resources for teaching assistants, ranging from course management system training and Turnitin.com Plagiarism Prevention Service training to cameras, a media lab, mobile computing carts, and much more.

CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Contact: Cheryl Wagner
MSEL, Garrett Room Q Level
410-516-7181
cwagner@jhu.edu
www.cer.jhu.edu

TRAINING RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM THE CER

TEACHING ASSISTANT TRAINING

Throughout the academic year, the CER collaborates with departments, deans, faculty and graduate students to run the TA Training Institute. This collection of programs and presentations is meant to introduce Hopkins TAs to sound pedagogical theory and practice. Through the Training Institute, TAs have the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities and interact with faculty to get advice for the classroom and beyond. Past programs have included "Preparing for the First Day" for Humanities, Sciences, and Engineering classes, "Leading Discussions," "Leading Labs," and "Managing Your Time as a TA." Videos of these sessions are available online on the CER website.

BLACKBOARD/COURSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM TRAINING

Blackboard is a web environment that enables faculty and graduate students to organize online course materials, utilize course tools and interact effectively with students via discussion boards. When used to its full potential, Blackboard can be an effective tool for the classroom. The CER offers both online and hands-on training for faculty interested in incorporating the program into their course. Links can be found on the CER website. Blackboard is an example of one type of a course management system.

ON-DEMAND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY HELP

The CER provides assistance when you need it and where you need it. Request a consultation in your office, or stop by the CER anytime between 9 and 5.

THE INNOVATIVE INSTRUCTOR

This series, available through the CER website and in hard copy form at the CER located on Q level of MSEL, is a forum for articles on teaching excellence at Johns Hopkins University. Written by Hopkins faculty or campus instructional technology experts, the goal is to increase communication about effective teaching solutions and how to achieve them. Through

these articles, instructors can share successful teaching strategies, learn what colleagues are doing, and discover new technologies and skills for the classroom or professional development.

THE INNOVATIVE INSTRUCTOR BLOG

The Innovative Instructor Blog (<http://ii.library.jhu.edu>) builds on the successful print series of the same name, which focuses on Pedagogy, Best Practices, and Technology. Blog posts are written cover topics such as active learning, assessment, use of case studies in instruction, classroom management, instructional design, how to engage students, grading and feedback, collaborative learning, leading discussions, hybrid instruction, and teaching methods. Posts are written by JHU faculty, staff members in teaching and learning centers, post docs, graduate and undergraduate students. If you have a teaching-related topic that you would like to share, please contact Macie Hall at macie.hall@jhu.edu. Or contact her if you have an issue or subject you would like to see covered in a future post.

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM THE CER

FACULTY MULTIMEDIA LAB

The CER provides a Multimedia Lab to all faculty and graduate student TAs. In addition, equipment, ranging from Tablet PCs to digital audio recorders, digital camcorders, a mobile computer classroom and more, is available upon request. To reserve equipment from the Faculty Multimedia Lab, visit the CER website.

EQUIPMENT CHECKOUT

The CER has two mobile computer carts equipped to transform your classroom into an interactive learning space; the carts include digital cameras, recorders, and more.

TECHNOLOGY FELLOWSHIP GRANT PROGRAM

The Technology Fellowship Program is a mini-grant initiative to help Hopkins faculty develop digital course resources by combining their instructional expertise with the technology skills of graduate and undergraduate students. The focus of this program is to create instructional resources that support undergraduate education. Faculty and students develop projects together to integrate technology into instructional projects that will enhance pedagogy, increase or facilitate access to course materials, encourage active learning, and promote critical thinking or collaboration among students. The project website is <http://www.cer.jhu.edu/techfellows.html>.

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM THE CER

EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

The CER offers versatile software to faculty for course use, such as an interactive Map Tool program (<http://www.cer.jhu.edu/maptool.html>) and a Timeline Tool program (<http://timeline.cer.jhu.edu>).

The Center also offers a subscription to the Turnitin.com plagiarism detection service, and an in-class voting student response (clicker) system.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

The CER will also provide interested faculty and TAs with an orientation to Web conferencing and collaboration with Adobe Connect and Skype.

TEACHING ASSISTANT TRAINING INSTITUTE

The Teaching Assistant Training Institute was formed to enhance the instructional experience of undergraduate students and to introduce Hopkins TAs to good instructional theory and practice.

Responsibilities assigned to TAs vary by department. Some are the sole instructors for a course; others lead laboratory exercises, run discussion sections, create and grade exams, or perform other course-related educational and administrative functions. These responsibilities are critically important to the smooth delivery of undergraduate education at Hopkins. Moreover, such activities provide an opportunity for graduate students who expect to pursue full-time college or university teaching to practice in designing and delivering effective undergraduate instruction.

TEACHING ASSISTANT TRAINING INSTITUTE

Contact: Richard Shingles, Ph.D., B.Ed.
410-516-4679
tati@jhu.edu
cer.jhu.edu/tatraining

PROGRAMS OFFERED

Currently, there are four components to the TA Training program.

I FALL TA ORIENTATION FOR FIRST-TIME TAs (REQUIRED SESSION)

More than 200 graduate students attend this event. New TAs are introduced to the administrative landscape of the TA at Hopkins through a mandatory plenary session. The focus of this event is on preparing TAs for their immediate instructional teaching assignments.

II FALL INTRODUCTORY TOPICS FOR FIRST-TIME TAs (REQUIRED SESSION)

The plenary session is followed by a series of seminars covering a variety of issues for first-time TAs, including "Preparing for the First Day," "Supporting a Lab," "Leading Effective Discussions," "Evaluating Writing Assignments," "The Art of Problem Solving Instruction," "Teaching with Library Resources," and "Teaching with Technology."

III EYES ON TEACHING (OPTIONAL)

A workshop series repeating topics given at TA orientation plus additional topics, targeted primarily at those with little or no formal training as educators, is offered during the academic year. These workshops are designed as a general preparation for instructors (current or future) to teach independently and effectively at the university level. The workshops are open to all graduate students and to others with instructional appointments at JHU, and will have added value for those developing a teaching portfolio. Go to <http://www.cer.jhu.edu/events.html> to register.

IV PREPARATION FOR UNIVERSITY TEACHING (ELECTIVE COURSE)

A formal course offered in the spring semester for graduate students. Participants in the course engage in peer-to-peer teaching, and have the opportunity to be videotaped and critiqued on their lecture presentations. The emphasis of the course is on lesson and course preparation, presentation skills, the effective facilitation of discussions, and the development of self-assessment techniques. The course is offered through KSAS (360.781) and WSE (500.781) and carries one credit.

TA MANUAL

The TA Training Institute also maintains this document, the graduate teaching manual “Making the Difference.” This is a handbook of information on teaching resources available at Hopkins. The manual also contains discipline-specific tips. To obtain a hard copy of the TA Manual, if you are reading it online, drop into the Center for Educational Resources office, Quad level of the MSEL.

SUPPORT OF TA TRAINING: TEACHING ASSOCIATES

Teaching Associates are graduate students who are models for good teaching practices within the university. The Associates maintain TA training materials, give workshops on teaching, and help advance knowledge about good teaching. The Associates are employed by the CER for one year beginning in June. Applications for Teaching Associate positions are made available starting in April.

CONSULTATIONS

The TA Training Institute will work with departments, graduate student groups and individuals to further the instructional training of students. Contact Richard Shingles at TATI@jhu.edu to set up an appointment.

GRADUATE ADMISSIONS IN ARTS & SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING

The Graduate Admissions Office for full-time graduate programs in the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering maintains a website with useful information for Johns Hopkins full-time graduate students at www.grad.jhu.edu. The site includes information on housing, living in Baltimore, professional development, student wellness, and other topics. It also has a page solely for Teaching Assistants, with information and links to other pertinent websites: homewoodgrad.jhu.edu/professional-development/teaching-assistant-resources/

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

KSAS Contact: Renee Seitz
Academic Program Manager
(410) 516-8477
rseitz5@jhu.edu
WSE Contact: Christine Kavanagh
Academic Program Manager
(410)516-7395
christinekavanagh@jhu.edu
www.grad.jhu.edu

THE ONLINE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Read the Undergraduate Student Handbook, the rule book for undergraduates, for information pertaining to such topics as add/drop deadlines and the deadline for filing Incompletes.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

www.advising.jhu.edu

INTEGRATED STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (ISIS)

Integrated Student Information System (ISIS) is Johns Hopkins' university-wide, web-based student information system. Faculty can utilize this system to print the course roster, email the entire class, and enter grades online.

INTEGRATED STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

isis.jhu.edu

INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS

One of the main concerns of international teaching assistants is that they may not be able to communicate effectively with their students in English. While linguistic and cultural differences exist, there are many ways, in addition to speech, to enhance your communication and make your teaching more universally appealing and accessible.

If students have a hard time understanding what you are saying, write the main points of your lecture on the board. Teaching with handouts can also help. Taking the time to create handouts before class gives you time to compose your thoughts and express them clearly in English.

Make sure you understand students' questions completely before you attempt to answer, even if that means asking the student to repeat the question. Also, check frequently to see if the students are following you. Don't forget to maintain eye contact as you explain material. After finishing one section of a lecture, ask the students if there are any questions before you continue.

Teaching may seem daunting at first, but like everything else, it gets easier with practice. Your ability to communicate will improve as you practice speaking and as you adapt to American culture. Interacting with your peers and colleagues— especially other international students— is a good way to build confidence in your own ability to communicate and gives you the opportunity to trade problems and solutions with others in the same situation. Above all, be patient with yourself. You can learn as much from your students as they will from you.

Remember that your English language ability is only one of your skills. You also have your passion for the material, your cultural background and your life experiences, all of which will help to make you a more interesting teacher. Your students can't take advantage of these things if you don't share them. On the first day, if you are comfortable doing so, tell the students where you are from and what other languages you speak. If the place you consider to be home is somewhere that you suspect many of them have never been to, bring in a picture. (Many JHU freshmen have never left the United States.) If you have studied at a university outside the United States, say so. If the classroom experience was very different at that university—for example, if there was little in-class discussion, or if the pedagogy of teaching the subject in question was different— take a moment to share that story with the students. This will make the students more comfortable, and if they later have trouble understanding something you say in class, they will not feel embarrassed to ask for clarification.

TEACHING SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL TAs

Contact: Julia Yarmolinskaya
The ESL Program for International TAs
Center for Language Education
510 Krieger Hall
410-516-4520

krieger.jhu.edu/esl/

CLASSES FOR INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS

The Center for Language Education offers classes for current and prospective international TAs through the English as a Second Language Program. These classes, which are covered by your tuition, focus on strengthening your English listening and speaking skills. They will also help you to improve your communication skills in the classroom.

Departments usually recommend their students for the courses, but you can also sign up on your own with permission of the instructor. A few weeks prior to the beginning of the semester, information about placement testing will be posted on the website for the ESL Program for International TAs (www.ltc.jhu.edu/esl_ta.htm). Departments also receive this information. You then may be asked to appear for an assessment of your English language oral skills to help determine which course, if any, would meet your needs.

The following is a description of the courses that are currently offered.

370.600 ORAL SKILLS FOR INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS (3 HOURS PER WEEK)

This course is intended for international TAs who are not native speakers of English. In addition to improving listening comprehension in everyday situations, students will improve their fluency, accuracy, and intelligibility in a variety of speaking situations. The core curriculum is designed to include a wide range of performance-based communicative activities.

Oral Skills for International TAs is open to international TAs and other full-time graduate students in Arts and Sciences and Engineering on the basis of a placement assessment.

370.601 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM (3 HOURS PER WEEK)

This course is designed to help international teaching assistants strengthen the skills needed to carry out teaching duties smoothly and effectively and improve oral fluency as it pertains to the classroom. Integrated online into the course are videos of each student's classroom teaching practices as well as examples of effective Hopkins teaching assistants. Instructors hold individual meetings with students to analyze teaching progress.

Communication Strategies in the American Classroom is open to international TAs and other full-time graduate students in Arts and Sciences and Engineering on the basis of a placement assessment.

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

The primary goal of the Office of International Student and Scholar Services is to help members of Hopkins' international community to acquire and maintain the appropriate visa status, and cope with the challenges of making a transition from one setting to another.

Their staff is prepared to help with issues international students may face in adapting to an academically and culturally different environment. On the Homewood campus, OISSS staff will be your first source of important information. Therefore, it is important that you meet them soon after your arrival at Johns Hopkins University.

OISSS staff members can answer your questions and advise you about immigration regulations, financial concerns, health matters, housing, employment possibilities, and other issues relating to your period of stay in the United States.

Johns Hopkins University offers a wide range of student services at Homewood, and, when necessary, OISSS will refer you to other offices that can more fully address your needs and concerns.

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND SCHOLAR SERVICES

Contact: Scott King, Ph.D., Director
135 Garland Hall
410-516-1013
theworld@jhu.edu
ois.jhu.edu

In order to properly attend to everyone, OISSS advisors require students and scholars to make an appointment prior to being seen for advising in the office.

For individuals whose questions require more personal attention than an e-mail or phone call permits, walk-in advising is held Tuesday from 9 AM to 11:30 AM and Thursday from 1 PM to 4:30 PM. These walk-in advising sessions do not require an appointment.

Advising services for new arrivals, I-9 processing, and signatures on I-20/DS-2019 forms may be handled at any time during OISSS office hours, and are not limited to walk-in advising hours.

OFFICE OF PRE-PROFESSIONAL ADVISING

The JHU Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising is dedicated to encouraging students interested in pursuing careers in the health and legal professions to make conscious and thoughtful decisions about their future paths. They serve undergraduates, graduate students, and alumni of the Krieger School of Arts & Sciences and the Whiting School of Engineering. Office resources are available to students beginning in their first year.

OFFICE OF PRE-PROFESSIONAL ADVISING

Contact: David Verrier, Ph.D., Director
302 Garland Hall
410-516-4140
dverrier@jhu.edu
web.jhu.edu/prepro

In light of Johns Hopkins University's mission to educate students and cultivate their capacity for life-long learning, to foster independent and original research, and to bring the benefits of discovery to the world, the Office of Pre-Professional Advising strives to:

- Provide high quality advising to assist and direct students in their intellectual and personal growth processes
- Provide education, information, and guidance related to the areas of health, law, business, and other graduate school options
- Offer programs and services that engage students and foster academic connections with a diverse community of professionals
- Develop respectful advisor-advisee relationships that focus on student learning
- Provide academic guidance so students can make informed decisions and choices about future career and educational goals
- Promote students' self-responsibility in defining and achieving their educational, personal, and career goals

TUTORING AND COUNSELING SERVICES

As a teaching assistant, you will usually have direct contact with the undergraduates in your class. You will be the first line of defense against serious academic problems. After the first exam, homework assignment, or essay, identify students who are having problems with the course. Meet with these students to find out what is going on—you can discreetly ask them to visit during office hours or stay after class for a few minutes. Students may be having personal problems, may need accommodation for disabilities, or may not have the necessary study skills or background for the class. Students may come to you with personal or academic problems, but if they are having trouble and do not seek your help, try to make an effort to reach them.

THE LEARNING DEN

The Office of Academic Advising offers academic assistance to full-time Homewood undergraduate students who want help with course material. Small-group tutoring is available throughout the academic school year for numerous courses. Inquiries about summer tutoring should be made to the Office of Academic Advising. There is no charge to take advantage of these services. Tutoring groups are available Sundays through Thursdays. Please check the website for up-to-date times and locations.

JHU TUTORING PROGRAM

Contact: Anne Benner
Garland Hall, Suite 3A
410-516-4839
tutoring@jhu.edu
academicsupport.jhu.edu/learning-den-tutoring

HELP ROOMS

Help rooms are run by their respective departments and offer free drop-in tutoring for interested students. There are help rooms for Chemistry, Languages, Math, and Physics.

For **Chemistry Help** rooms students should consult their course syllabus.

Language Help is available for Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

The **Math Help** Room is located in 213 Krieger Hall <http://www.mathematics.jhu.edu/new/>

The **Physics Help** Room is open Monday to Friday from 1 - 5 PM in Bloomberg 261.

THE STUDY CONSULTING PROGRAM

The Study Consulting Program is designed to help students improve their academic performance. Consultants are trained graduate students or seniors who provide general assistance with academic issues such as organizational and time management skills, procrastination, test anxiety, note taking, study techniques, reading college text books, and self-discipline. Students and consultants

STUDY CONSULTING PROGRAM

Contact: Fay M. Day, M.Ed., Assistant Director
385 Garland Hall
410-516-5506
fday2@jhu.edu
academicsupport.jhu.edu/study-consulting

meet once each week for one hour at an agreed-upon time and location. There is no charge for participation in this program, which focuses on the needs of the student.

WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center offers undergraduate and graduate student writers free, individual conferences with experienced tutors trained to consult on academic writing assignments. Students can work with tutors on any aspect of the writing process, from organizing their thinking to revising their drafts. (The Writing Center does not provide consultations on fiction or poetry.) The Writing Center offers fifty-minute appointments, starting on the hour, and usually maintains hours Sunday through Thursday, 2-10 PM. Although walk-ins are accepted, students are strongly encouraged to book appointments in advance by using their JHED IDs at the center's online scheduler (web1.johnshopkins.edu/writingcenter). The Writing Center is located in the Hutzler Reading Room of Gilman Hall (Room 230).

WRITING CENTER

Contact: Elizabeth (Beth) Steedley, Director
Gilman Hall 14 (Hutzler Reading Room)
410-516-4258
writingcenter@jhu.edu
sites.jhu.edu/writingcenter

COUNSELING CENTER

The Counseling Center assists students in maintaining and enhancing their psychological and emotional well-being. Severe emotional problems are not a prerequisite for going to the Counseling Center. Students may use the resources at the Counseling Center for personal growth and enrichment. The Center also offers educational and support programs. All services are confidential and free of charge to full-time undergraduate and graduate students from the Schools of Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and the Peabody Institute. Individual, couples, and group counseling are available. Counseling groups can cover a wide range of themes, from Parent Loss or Survivors of Sexual Abuse to Personal Growth. The Counseling Center also offers services in career decision-making, consultation, workshops, and outreach programs.

If you notice significant changes in the work or attitude of a student, consider referring her or him to the Counseling Center. If a student comes to talk to you and you feel that his or her problems are beyond your ability to help, be accepting and non-judgmental and offer to connect the person with professionals in the Counseling Center.

Students desiring Counseling Center services can make appointments in person or by telephone. In addition, a professional staff member is on duty each day for immediate assistance in case of an emergency. The Counseling Center is staffed primarily by licensed psychologists. Center services are also provided by interns who are advanced doctoral students in professional psychology and work under the supervision of senior staff. The Counseling Center has consulting psychiatrists available for medication management and consultation.

RECOGNIZING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

This website, provided by the Counseling Center, lists some of the signs of students in distress, including students who may be suicidal or potentially dangerous. TAs should read through it carefully. You may find yourself in a position to observe and

recognize changes that signal psychological distress in students. This is not to imply that you need to be on the watch, but rather that students often seek out faculty and staff to share their distress. At other times, you may become concerned with the behavior you have observed in one of your students. Being able to identify students in distress, having some guidelines for dealing with distressed students, and being aware of appropriate referral resources that can assist you will allow you to be more in control of situations which may present themselves.

The Counseling Center also holds workshops for recognizing and assisting students in distress and is happy to advise you with any concerns you might have.

JHU COUNSELING CENTER

Michael Mond, Ph.D., Director
mond@jhu.edu

Barbara Baum, Ph.D., Associate Director,
Coordinator for Services to Graduate Students
baum@jhu.edu

3003 North Charles Street, S-200
410-516-8278
www.jhu.edu/counselingcenter

RECOGNIZING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

web.jhu.edu/counselingcenter/worried/index.html

THE SHERIDAN LIBRARIES

The Johns Hopkins library network is called the Sheridan Libraries. This network includes the Milton S. Eisenhower Library, which is the principal research library at the University. Other specialized collections in medicine, international affairs, music, and space science are located across the University's campuses. Smaller collections are also maintained at the satellite campuses and centers.

THE SHERIDAN LIBRARIES

410-516-8335

library.jhu.edu

For listing of all JHU libraries:

webapps.jhu.edu/jhuniverse/libraries

RESOURCES PROVIDED BY THE SHERIDAN LIBRARIES

The Sheridan Libraries have a variety of resources for graduate students.

- Subject-specialist librarians who serve specific academic departments and programs (www.library.jhu.edu/departments/rsc/rslist.html)
- Research guides created specifically for your subject area and for finding specific types of information (guides.library.jhu.edu)
- Automatic email updates from databases (guides.library.jhu.edu/rss)
- Information on how to cite sources properly (guides.library.jhu.edu/citing)
- Tools for to assist you in writing for publication (guides.library.jhu.edu/publishing)
- The Government Publications/Maps/Law Library (GPML), a United States government depository library. It selects approximately 50 percent of the items offered to depository libraries. (www.library.jhu.edu/collections/gpml/index.html)
- Online Interlibrary Services & Document Delivery System for requesting and receiving electronic documents (library.jhu.edu)
- Rare books, historical manuscripts, and University archives (guides.library.jhu.edu/specialcollections)
- The Sheridan Libraries Blog, for up-to-date news, information, events and more (blogs.library.jhu.edu/wordpress)
- TILE - Toolkit for Inclusive Learning Environments (guides.library.jhu.edu/TILE)

These are just a few of the many resources offered by The Sheridan Libraries, and are useful tools for your own research as well as great resources for your students.

LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR STUDENT RESEARCH

The library provides specialized services for courses that require research. When given advance notice, subject librarians can lead a class session that instructs students on how to use library resources. These sessions are geared toward the needs of your particular course and can take place within the library, where students can shadow the subject librarian on library computers, or within your own classroom. In addition, subject librarians can design a customized page on the library website that guides students in conducting the specific research demanded by your course. If you don't have the time to arrange a session in the library, you can still steer your students to the library's Reference Office, where a librarian is on duty weekdays from 10 AM until 9 PM during the school year, with limited hours on weekends or during holidays and the summer.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Special Collections department houses rare books, historical manuscripts, university archives, sheet music, and digital collections.

Materials are housed in three locations. The Milton S. Eisenhower Library houses the Eisenhower Rare Book Collection, the Ferdinand Hamburger University Archives Manuscripts, and the Levy Sheet

Music Collection. The John Work Garrett Library of rare books and manuscripts is in the Garrett family home, Evergreen House, at 4545 North Charles Street. Finally, the George Peabody Library, in its magnificent Victorian building, is located at 17 East Mount Vernon Place. For hours and directions to each location, visit the department web site.

Special collections cover the historical aspects of most disciplines, and librarians are eager to work with faculty and graduate students to use these materials to support and enhance teaching. Holding a class in Rare Books and Manuscripts offers students a tangible experience of history in the classroom setting and adds exciting depth to almost any course. All Hopkins students are welcome to make use of these materials for individual research, and in most cases, librarians can also make arrangements to support course-related research assignments. Please contact Earle Havens, Curator of Rare Books, ehavens2@jhu.edu, for more information on using Special Collections materials.

LIBRARY ELECTRONIC RESERVES

Instructors of courses offered by all divisions of the Johns Hopkins University on the Homewood campus may reserve required and recommended materials for their students. These materials include published books, book excerpts, journal articles, government documents, videos, DVDs, CD-ROMs, and audio materials.

This service will also digitize copies of book chapters or journal articles that are not already available online that you may require or recommend for your courses. Lists may be submitted electronically by online [article](#) or [book](#) forms, via email to reserves@jhu.edu, or with the printed forms that are sent to instructors every semester. These forms can be returned via campus mail or faxed to (410) 516-8908.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Contact: Elizabeth Mengel, M.L.S.,
Associate Director
Brody Learning Commons
(410) 516-8348
emengel@jhu.edu
www.library.jhu.edu/collections/specialcollections/index.html

LIBRARY RESERVES SERVICES

Contact: Abby Collier
MSEL, M-level north
410-516-8377
reserves@jhu.edu
reserves.library.jhu.edu

EQUIPMENT

At times, you may need the assistance of additional equipment in your course. Johns Hopkins provides you with access to various AV materials, multi-media equipment, and the capacity to have your own course website.

AUDIOVISUAL CENTER

The Audiovisual Center provides access to the Eisenhower Library's audiovisual materials, including microforms, audiotapes, compact discs, DVDs, DVD-ROMs, computer software, guidebooks, laserdiscs, records, slides, and videotapes. If the center does not have the materials your course needs, your subject librarian may be able to order the materials you need. You can also reserve AV group viewing rooms for your class to watch DVDs or other multimedia. These rooms are set up theater-style with large flat-screen TVs. You can use them for outside viewing assignments, or even hold a class session there if your classroom does not have adequate AV services. Booking a room in advance is recommended. The Audiovisual Center will place films and other AV materials on reserve for your class. Please contact the Audiovisual Center if you have any questions.

AUDIOVISUAL CENTER

Contact: Lynn Mathieu, M.Ed.
MSEL, A-Level
410-516-8353
avmail@jhu.edu
www.library.jhu.edu/departments/av

KIT-CATS - CLASSROOM AUDIO-VISUAL TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Classroom Audio-Visual Technology Services offers a wide range of technological applications for the Homewood campus. These services include the delivery and setup of video conferencing technology for meetings, conferences, courses, and special events, as well as audio and video recording services (both digital and Mediasite) at an hourly rate. KIT-CATS also provide digital conversion services for converting analog audio cassettes to MP3 digital audio files. The staff can provide consultation services relating to presentation technologies or serve in a simple advisory role on the best type of equipment for a given application. KIT-CATS provides equipment at no cost for undergraduate courses (restrictions do apply; please see the website for details). All equipment is available on a first-come, first-served basis. It is recommended that requests be made at least a week in advance of the event or activity.

AUDIO VISUAL SERVICES

KITCATS@jhu.edu

DIGITAL MEDIA CENTER

The Digital Media Center is a great place to work and play. The lab's mission is to prepare life-long learners to confidently master new technologies and to disseminate works that effectively communicate their ideas.

The professional and student staff offers training and support in the use of multimedia hardware and software through workshops, peer coaching, and 1-on-1 mentoring. Students may borrow equipment such as video and still cameras, music creation/recording gear, game systems, projectors, and sound equipment for club events, academic projects, and personal recreation.

DIGITAL MEDIA CENTER

Contact: Joan Freedman, M.S., Director
226 Mattin Arts Center
410-516-3817
digitalmedia@jhu.edu
digitalmedia.jhu.edu

The main lab features 16 dual-boot workstations with a wide selection of software for video, audio, graphics, web, and 3D modeling. The game lab is a fully equipped development and testing center with high-end workstations, including specialized graphics cards, unique interface devices, development software, and a 5.1 surround-sound system for testing and game play. The recording studio contains a state-of-the art composition, recording, and editing system complete with synthesizers, keyboards, drums, and effects processors.

The DMC offers many opportunities for merging art and technology through interdisciplinary collaboration and research such as Wilson and PURA projects, Arts Innovation Grants, Creative Use of Technology grants, and independent video production, web site design and video game development. The DMC is open to any full-time student in the Schools of Arts & Sciences and Engineering. During the academic year, the center is open from noon to midnight Sunday through Thursday and noon to 10 PM on Friday and Saturday.

HOMWOOD IMAGING & PHOTOGRAPHIC SERVICES

Homewood Photography is your on-campus resource for great, reliable, and reasonably priced imaging and photographic services. These are some of the services their studio offers: environmental and studio portraiture; event and party photography; news photography; group photos; departmental photos; scientific and technical photography; architectural photography; sports photography; annual report and feature photography; copy slides; copy prints; digital copy photography; passport, visa, and application photos; digital printing (from small scale and wide-format); slide scans (individual and bulk); flatbed scans and slides and digital images of original artwork.

HOMWOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

Contact: Jay VanRensselaer, Will Kirk
Suite 704N, Wyman Building
410-516-5332
homewoodphoto@jhu.edu
homewoodphoto.jhu.edu

JSHARE

JHBox is a cloud-based file sharing and file storage system which enables people to collaborate and share information through any device: desktop, laptop, phone or tablet. JHBox makes it easy to upload content, organize files, share links to files, and manage file and folder permissions. Any Johns Hopkins user can share files with students and others outside the institution. JHBox comes with 50 GB of free space per user.

JHBOX

it.johnshopkins.edu/services

Graduate Student Portal

You can access the Graduate Student Portal through the my.jhu.edu website. The portal has information geared specifically towards the graduate student community.

GRADUATE STUDENT PORTAL

my.jhu.edu

SELECTED REFERENCES ON UNIVERSITY TEACHING

Tools for Teaching and *Teaching Tips*, in bold in the list below, are good places to start.

- Angelo, T. and Cross, P.K. *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.
- Bain, K., *What the Best College Teachers Do*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004
- Beard, R. and Hartley, J. *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. 4th ed. London: Harper and Row, 1984.
- Biggs, J. *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003.
- Brookfield, S.D. *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.
- Brookfield, S. D. *The Skilled Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990.
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- Davis, B. *Tools for Teaching*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.**
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- Dunkin, M. J. and Barnes, J. "Research on teaching in higher education." *Handbook of Research on Teaching*. Ed. M. C. Wittrock. 3rd ed. New York: MacMillan, 1986.
- Eble, K. E. *The Aims of College Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983.
- Eble, K. E. *The Craft of Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988.
- Fuhrmann, B. S. and Grasha, A. F. *A Practical Handbook for College Teaching*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1983.
- Gullette, M. M., ed. *The Art and Craft of Teaching*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Handelsman, J., Miller S. and Pfund C. *Scientific Teaching*. New York: W. H. Freeman, 2007
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- Lowman, J. *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.
- McKeachie, W. and Svinicki M. *Teaching Tips*. 12th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.**
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- Nilson, L. *Teaching at its Best*. Bolton: Anker Publishing Co, 2003.
- Prégent, R. *Charting Your Course: How to Prepare to Teach More Effectively*. Madison: Magna Publications, 1994.
- Walvoord, B. E. and Anderson V. J. *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998

ETHICS AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

An important part of being a TA is administering the policies that preserve academic integrity at Johns Hopkins.

Don't worry; you're not alone in this endeavor. It is your responsibility to recognize problems and report them immediately to your supervising professor. Then, the professor, dean of students, and the Undergraduate Academic Ethics Board will work together to enforce the academic policies.

That said, it is vitally important for you to document any academic misconduct clearly and to inform your instructor immediately. Your instructor will contact the associate dean of student affairs and may even request a direct settlement or hearing request. If a hearing in front of the Ethics Board is necessary, your instructor will be expected to present an account of the case as well as provide supporting evidence.

In this chapter, we will discuss some of the more common types of academic misconduct with tips on how to recognize and deal with the situations. This chapter will also address pitfalls you need to avoid, such as sexual harassment, grading policies, and fairness.

UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS ON ETHICS, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

A WORD ON ETHICS

As a TA, you may have contact with the Office of the Dean of Student Life if you suspect a student of having committed an ethics violation.

The official ethics statement is as follows:

The strength of the University depends on academic and personal integrity. Ethical violations would include cheating on exams, plagiarism, the reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations that you witness to the professor of your course.

ETHICS

Office of the Dean of Student Life:
Dean Terry Martinez
tmartinez@jhu.edu
Associate Dean

Mattin Center, Offit Bldg, Ste. 210
410-516-8208
web.jhu.edu/studentlife

STATEMENT OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Johns Hopkins University is a community committed to sharing values of diversity and inclusion in order to achieve and sustain excellence. We believe excellence is best promoted by being a diverse group of students, faculty and staff who are committed to creating a climate of mutual respect that is supportive of one another's success. Through its curricula and clinical experiences, the University purposefully supports this goal of diversity, and in particular, works towards an outcome of best serving the needs of students. Faculty and candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of diversity as it relates to planning, instruction, management, and assessment.

CHEATING

The best way to combat cheating is to provide an explicit definition of cheating in the context of the course at the beginning of the semester. According to the *Academic Ethics Guide for Undergraduates*, cheating is defined as "the act of stealing ideas, information, and words. Any act that violates authorship or takes undue advantage is cheating." Cheating can take on a variety of different forms. While cheating during an exam is the most obvious type, students can be called to the Ethics Board for knowingly facilitating cheating, creating unfair competition, lying, or collaborating inappropriately with other students on assignments.

To prevent cheating before it happens, you should minimize the temptation to cheat as much as possible. An attentive eye may be enough to discourage most students from cheating. For quizzes and exams, put an empty seat between each person and reiterate the policy before the exam begins. Another option for some classes may be to require students to turn in an outline and rough draft before the final paper.

Clearly define the rules on collaboration between students on assignments, papers, and exam preparation. It is critical that you explain these policies, as they vary greatly between departments and professors. Make sure that the cheating policy is enforced evenly for all students. Finally, try not to change policies mid-semester. If you feel that you must change the policy, communicate the new policy and your reasons for the change during class. If you treat cheating seriously, your students will do the same.

PLAGIARISM

The best way to deal with plagiarism is to nip it in the bud. The *Academic Ethics Guide for Undergraduates* briefly defines plagiarism as "representing someone else's information, ideas or words as your own by failing to acknowledge the source." Clearly define plagiarism on the first day of class and before the first paper is due. Hand out written definitions and examples. Plagiarism is a serious problem and can have very serious repercussions—make sure your students understand the rules and the consequences before they start writing.

If you suspect plagiarism, copy the original paper and then go through the student's work and the texts carefully. Document all cases of plagiarism, whether verbatim use of an author's works or stolen ideas. And, since the professor is ultimately responsible for dealing with plagiarism, discuss any issues with him or her as soon as possible.

GUIDES TO PROPER CITATION

MSEL Citation Guide
guides.library.jhu.edu/citing

International Federation of Libraries
archive.ifla.org/I/training/citation/citing.htm

TURNITIN.COM PLAGIARISM PREVENTION SERVICE

JHU has a University-wide site license for the Turnitin.com plagiarism prevention service. This service provides an easy-to-use method for instructors to check the content of papers for unoriginal material. The CER offers Turnitin training and information for KSAS and WSE instructors. Instructors can request a Turnitin account by sending an email to turnitin@jhu.edu. Requests from TAs need to be coordinated with a sponsoring faculty member.

TURNITIN.COM PLAGIARISM PREVENTION SERVICE

Contact: Brian Cole
turnitin@jhu.edu
www.turnitin.com

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY

As a TA, you may have contact with the Office of Institutional Equity for a variety of reasons, including concerns relating to diversity, disabilities, harassment/discrimination complaints, or equity compliance.

The Office of Institutional Equity was established to provide leadership for university efforts to promote institutional equity and a diverse university community.

The Office assures that the university's programs and procedures comply with federal, state and local laws and regulations as related to affirmative action and equal opportunity with special attention to disability issues.

The office develops and coordinates the implementation of the university's Institutional Equity Programs and procedures. In addition, the office provides training efforts related to disability issues and sexual and other forms of harassment.

The office receives, investigates and responds to discrimination complaints on the basis of gender, marital status, pregnancy, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, veteran status and other legally protected characteristics. The office also provides mediation services for University-related issues.

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY

Diversity Issues:

Caroline Laguerre-Brown, J.D.,
Vice Provost, Office of Institutional Equity
clbrown@jhu.edu

Disability Issues:

Abigail Hurson, M.S.,
Director, ADA Compliance and Disability Services
ahurson1@jhu.edu

Harassment/Discrimination Complaints:

Allison Boyle, J.D., M.P.H.,
Director, Equity Compliance and Education
aboyle7@jhu.edu

Diversity Leadership Council

130 Garland Hall
410-516-8075
web.jhu.edu/dlc

HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION CLAIMS AND YOUR ROLE AS A TA

The TA-student relationship carries the potential of becoming a fertile ground for claims of harassment and other forms of discrimination because of the inherent power imbalance. You should be mindful of that danger and maintain appropriate and professional relationships with your students. To this end, it is better to be too formal than to be too casual. Dressing professionally, only meeting with students in public places and during daytime hours, and treating all students in the course equally will help create a natural sense of formality.

You should contact the Office of Institutional Equity if you become aware of a harassment or discrimination issue during the course of your duties. If a student discloses an issue involving harassment or discrimination, make no promises of confidentiality. Instead, TAs confronted with such disclosures should make the students aware of the available complaint process and refer students to the Office of Institutional Equity.

TEACHING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

DISABILITIES

Students who disclose a disability to the University must be reasonably accommodated in both the classroom and in extracurricular activities as a function of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Although the term “disability” is more easily applied to noticeable conditions – such as mobility, hearing, or visual impairments – many disabilities that you encounter in a University setting will be hidden. These include conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder, learning disabilities, chronic medical issues and psychological disorders. The ADA mandates that individuals with any of these disabilities be provided reasonable and appropriate accommodations to ensure equal access to, and participate in, the programs and services offered by the University. When these accommodations are provided, students with disabilities can be expected to meet course requirements in a manner comparable to their classmates.

STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES

385 Garland Hall
studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu
410 516-4720
web.jhu.edu/disabilities

ACCOMMODATIONS

Each student with a disability is accommodated on a case-by-case basis after a review of the documentation of his or her disability. Accommodations can include extended testing time, use of a private testing space, note takers, interpreters, textbooks on CD, or priority course scheduling.

YOUR ROLE AS A TA

Before any student receives accommodations, he/she must bring you an “accommodations letter” from the Director of the Office of Student Disability Services, outlining the specific classroom accommodations that have been authorized by the University’s ADA Compliance Officer. You must keep all the information you receive about a student’s disability confidential. Moreover, you and the course instructor must work with the student to ensure that the authorized accommodations are implemented. If a student discloses a disability to you and either does not have an accommodations letter or has not consulted the Office for Student Disability Services, you should refer that student to the Director of that Office. **Do not** attempt to accommodate the student on your own.

The accommodation process can take time, so be sure to instruct your students to communicate their needs to you no later than the first week of class and then again each time they require something specific (e.g. private location for an exam). Request that they always provide you at least a week’s notice so you have adequate time to arrange the accommodation. In addition, it is strongly recommended that you place a statement like the following in your syllabus to help clarify the accommodation: “All students with disabilities who require accommodations for this course should contact me at their earliest convenience to discuss their specific needs. If you have a documented disability, you must be registered with the JHU Office for Disability Services (385 Garland Hall; 410 516 4720; <http://web.jhu.edu/disabilities/students/admitted/registering.html>) to arrange the receipt of accommodations.”

POINTS TO REMEMBER IN THE CLASSROOM

- Students who present you with an accommodations letter from the Office for Student Disability Services are entitled to their accommodations as a function of federal ADA law. As such, you must take all appropriate actions to ensure that they receive these accommodations in a timely manner.
- When in doubt about how to assist a student with disabilities, ask the student directly and check the accommodations letter provided by the Office for Student Disability Services. If you still have questions, call (410) 516-4720.
- Confidentiality of all student information is absolutely essential. At no time should the class be informed that a given student has a disability, unless that student makes a specific request to do so. Failure to protect students' confidentiality is a violation of both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Flexibility may be necessary when applying attendance and promptness rules to students with health-related or mobility difficulties. All requests for flexibility because of a disability should come from the Office for Student Disability Services (and should be outlined in the accommodations letter) to prevent misuse of this accommodation by the student.
- The Student Code of Conduct regarding disruptive behavior applies to all students. You should state behavioral expectations clearly for all students and discuss them openly in your classroom, on your syllabus, and with individual students as necessary.
- For more information on types of disabilities and suggestions for instructors, go to the online Teaching Guide for Faculty and Staff: web.jhu.edu/disabilities/faculty/guidelines.html

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Your responsibility as a TA is to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages mutual respect and is not conducive to sexual harassment. It is also your responsibility to respond appropriately when sexual harassment does occur. If a student brings a complaint to your attention, listen neutrally and express concern. Do not try and handle the situation on your own, but rather refer the complaint to the Office of Institutional Equity and/or the Dean of Student Life.

Sexual harassment can occur in many different forms. Sexual harassment, whether between people of different sexes or the same sex, is defined to include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

- 1) submission to such conduct is made implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of an individual's participation in an educational program;
- 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for academic evaluation or advancement; or
- 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT RESOURCES

Confidential Consultants:

Sexual Harassment Hotline	410-516-4001
Toll Free	1-800-516-4001
Counseling and Student Development Center	410-516-8278
Campus Ministries (www.jhu.edu/chaplain)	410-261-1880
Student Assistance Program, East Baltimore Campus	443-287-7000
Student Assistance Program, Eastern Campus	443-997-7000

Complaints of Sexual Harassment may be brought to:

Terry Martinez, Dean of Student Life	410-516-8208
Caroline Laguerre-Brown, J.D., Vice Provost, Office of Institutional Equity	410-516-8075
Allison J. Boyle, J.D., M.P.H., Director, Equity Compliance and Education	410-516-8075

FAIRNESS (FLIRTATION, FAMILIARITY, AND FAVORITISM)

You can help minimize grade disputes by making it clear to students that you treat everyone equally. This may sound self-evident, but it is not so simple. Remember that you must maintain a professional relationship with ALL of the students. If some students perceive that you are especially friendly to other members of the class, they are likely to assume that you will not grade objectively. Maintain a professional distance, and be equally friendly with and accessible to all students.

Make sure not to get too personally involved with your students. Do not become romantically involved with any student in your class. Due to the nature of power relations in the classroom, a fine line distinguishes romance from sexual harassment (discussed above), the latter of which is specifically forbidden by University regulations and public law.

FERPA – FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT

As a TA for Johns Hopkins, you may have access to private student records. You have a responsibility to protect all education records in your possession. The confidentiality, use, and release of student records are governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). To comply with FERPA, (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), the University may not release “personally identifiable information” from an education record. Personally identifiable information is any information that is directly linked or easily traceable to an individual student, such as Social Security or Hopkins ID numbers.

The following is a partial list of the rights afforded to students under FERPA. You can find a comprehensive guide to the University Policy on Family Educational Rights and Privacy at www.jhu.edu/news_info/policy/ferpa.html.

FERPA Student Rights:

The right to inspect and review the student’s education records within 45 days of the day the University receives a request for access.

Students should submit to the registrar, dean, head of the academic department, or other appropriate official, written requests that identify the record(s) they wish to inspect. The University official will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. If the records are not maintained by the University official to whom the request was submitted, that official shall advise the student of the correct official to whom the request should be addressed.

The right to request the amendment of the student’s education records that the student believes is inaccurate.

Students may ask the University to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate. They should write to the University official responsible for the record, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate.

If the University decides not to amend the record as requested by the student, the University will notify the student of the decision and advise the student of his or her right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the student when notified of the right to a hearing.

The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student’s education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the University in an administrative, supervisory, academic or research, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); a person or company with whom the University has contracted (such as an attorney, auditor, or collection agent); a person serving on the Board of Trustees; or a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, the University discloses education records without consent to officials of another school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by State University to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

TO AVOID VIOLATIONS OF FERPA RULES, PLEASE DO NOT:

- Post grades
- Require social security or Hopkins ID numbers on submitted materials or link a student's name and SSN or Hopkins ID in any public manner
- Use full or partial SSNs or Hopkins ID's for grade postings
- Leave graded tests or assignments in a stack for students to pick up by sorting through the papers of all students
- Circulate a printed class list with names, social security or Hopkins ID numbers, or grades as an attendance roster
- Discuss the progress of any student with anyone (including the student's parents) without the written consent of the student
- Provide lists of students enrolled in your classes to any third party for any commercial purpose
- Provide student schedules or assist anyone other than University employees in finding a student on campus

The ramifications for violations of FERPA are severe, including possible loss of Title IV Financial Aid Funding. If you have any questions about this, please call the Office of the General Counsel at 410-516-8128 or the Office of the Registrar at 410-516-7148.

BEST PRACTICES FOR RETURNING GRADED EXAMINATIONS AND PAPERS:

- Return exams or papers yourself, or ask your department administrator to do so if you are unable to.
- Fold and staple exams or papers with only the name of the student visible on the front
- At the end of term ask students to submit a pre-addressed stamped envelope to return exams or papers.
- If you must post grades, use code words or randomly assigned numbers known only by you and the individual student. The order should not be alphabetical.
- Post grades to Blackboard (only the students can access their own information.)

APPENDICES

SAMPLE MID-SEMESTER EVALUATION #1

Teaching Assistant Name:

Course Name and Number:

1. What is your class standing?
2. What are the best aspects of this course?
3. What things in this course could be improved?
4. What aspects of the class would you like to see changed?
How would you suggest making these changes?
5. What are the best readings? Worst readings?
Would you drop any of the readings? Please explain.
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the instructor/teaching assistant?
7. How would you compare the instructor/teaching assistant to others you have had at Hopkins?
8. What is your understanding of the goals of this course? Are they being achieved?

Please rate the items below:

<u>Teaching Assistant</u>	Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Poor
Knowledge of subject matter	1	2	3	4
Preparedness	1	2	3	4
Organization	1	2	3	4
Presentation	1	2	3	4
Accessibility	1	2	3	4
<u>Course Content and Format</u>				
Readings	1	2	3	4
Design & cohesiveness of the course	1	2	3	4

9. Please write additional comments on back.

SAMPLE MID-SEMESTER EVALUATION #2

Teaching Activity Profile:	Not Descriptive			Very Descriptive		
1. Discusses points of view other than his/her own.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
2. Discusses recent developments in the field.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
3. Emphasizes conceptual understanding.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
4. Explains clearly.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
5. Is well prepared.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
6. Summarizes major points.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
7. Identifies what he/she considers important.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
8. Encourages class discussion.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
9. Invites students to share their knowledge and experiences.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
10. Invites criticism of her/his own ideas.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
11. Knows if the class is following lecture or discussion.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
12. Has students apply concepts to demonstrate understanding.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
13. Gives personal help to students having difficulty.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
14. Relates to students as individuals.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
15. Is accessible to students outside of class.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
16. Has an interesting style of presentation.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
17. Varies speed and tone of her/his voice.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
18. Motivates students to do their best work.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
19. Gives interesting and stimulating assignments.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
20. Gives examinations permitting students to show understanding.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
21. Keeps students informed of their progress.	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
22. Please identify what you perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the course.						
23. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the instructor?						
24. What improvements would you suggest?						

Source: *Teaching with Excellence Idea Compendium*, University of California, Berkeley, 1983. Reprinted with permission.

UNIVERSITY CONTACTS

Office/Service	Phone Number	Web Address
Academic Advising	410-516-8216	www.jhu.edu/advising
Recreation Center/Services	410-516-7490	web.jhu.edu/recreation
Audiovisual Center (Library)	410-516-8353	www.library.jhu.edu/collections/av/index.html
Audio Visual Services (KIT-CATS)	410-516-6699	it.johnshopkins.edu/services/technical/customerservices/avrequests.html
Biosafety Officer	410-955-5918	www.hopkinsbiosafety.org
Bookstore	410-662-5850	johns-hopkins.bncollege.com
Calendars (Academic, Events, etc.)		www.jhu.edu/calendar
Career Center	410-516-8056	www.jhu.edu/~careers
Center for Educational Resources	410-516-7181	www.cer.jhu.edu
Classroom Reservations (Day)	410-516-8086	www.jhu.edu/classrooms
Classroom Reservations (Evening)	410-516-8086	www.jhu.edu/classrooms
Counseling Center	410-516-8278	www.jhu.edu/counselingcenter
Custodial Services	410-516-8931	www.jhfre.jhu.edu
Dean of Admissions & Enrollment	410-516-7875	
Dean of Arts and Sciences	410-516-8220	www.jhu.edu/ksas
Dean of Engineering	410-516-4050	www.engineering.jhu.edu
Dean of Student Life	410-516-8208	web.jhu.edu/studentlife
Digital Media Center	410-516-3817	digitalmedia.jhu.edu
Disability Services	410-516-4720	web.jhu.edu/disabilities
Hopkins Emergency Response	410-516-7777	
Campus Escort Services	410-516-8700	www.jhu.edu/~security/services.html
Expository Writing Program	410-516-7545	krieger.jhu.edu/ewp
Graduate Representative Organization (GRO)	410-516-7682	www.jhu.edu/gro
Homewood Operator	410-516-8000	
Homewood Institutional Review Board	410-516-6580	web.jhu.edu/Homewood-IRB
International Student and Scholar Services	410-516-1013	www.jhu.edu/iss
IT Services (HITS)	410-516-HELP	it.jhu.edu
J-Card (Hopkins ID Card)	410-516-5121	www.idcs.jhu.edu
JHMI Operator	410-955-5000	
Johns Hopkins Federal Credit Union	410-534-4500	www.jhfcu.org
Maryland Poison Center	800-222-1222	www.mdpoison.com
MSE Library-- Electronic Reserves	410-516-8377	reserves.library.jhu.edu/access/reserves
MSE Library—Circulation	410-516-8370	library.jhu.edu/services/circulation/index.html
MSE Library—Information/Reference	410-516-8335	www.library.jhu.edu/services/askalib/index.html
Multicultural Student Affairs	410-516-8730	web.jhu.edu/studentprograms/multicultural
myJohnsHopkins Portal		my.johnshopkins.edu
Office of Health, Safety and Environment	410-516-8798	www.jhu.edu/safety
Parking	410-516-PARK	www.parking.jhu.edu
Peer Counseling — Undergraduate	443-823-2459	http://pages.jh.edu/aptt
President's Office	410-516-8068	www.jhu.edu/president
Provost's Office	410-516-8070	web.jhu.edu/administration/provost
Registrar	410-516-8080	www.jhu.edu/~registr
Security Office — Information	410-516-4600	www.jhu.edu/~security
Sexual Assault Resource Unit	410-516-7887	http://saru.johnshopkins.edu/
Shuttle Service (HMWD-JHMI)	410-516-PARK	www.parking.jhu.edu/shuttles_jhmi_homewood.html
Student Health and Wellness	410-516-8270	studenthealth.johnshopkins.edu
Tutoring Program	410-516-8216	www.jhu.edu/academic-assistance
Weather Hotline	410-516-7781	esgwebproxy.johnshopkins.edu/notice
Writing Center	410-516-4258	sites.jhu.edu/writingcenter

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