

August 2009

Teaching Assistant Training Institute Richard Shingles, Director of the TA Training Institute

What this is

The Innovative Instructor is an article series (<http://cer.jhu.edu/ii>) and a blog (<http://ii.library.jhu.edu>) related to teaching excellence at Johns Hopkins

Article categories

Best Practice

How to use technologies and apply innovative instructional methods

Pedagogy

Hopkins professors share successful strategies for teaching excellence

Technology

Information about emerging technologies, who is using them, and why you should know

For information on how to contribute to *The Innovative Instructor* or to read archived articles please visit:

<http://cer.jhu.edu/ii>

or email:

cerweb@jhu.edu

About the CER

The Center for Educational Resources partners with faculty, postdocs, and graduate students to extend instructional impact by connecting innovative teaching strategies and instructional technologies

Center for
**Educational
Resources**

What is it

The Teaching Assistant Training Institute consists of a team of professionals managed by the Center for Educational Resources to provide general instructional training for full-time graduate and undergraduate students with teaching assignments in the Krieger School of Arts & Sciences or the Whiting School of Engineering. The Institute works with Academic Dean's, teaching faculty, graduate teaching assistants, graduate academic coordinators and the graduate representative organization to provide the training and support that TAs need for effective instruction. The Institute has a multi-faceted approach to provide this training and support as outlined below.



TA Training Institute is located at the CER in the MSE Library

Why it matters

Quite simply, every graduate student has the opportunity to be a TA, or maybe even a course instructor, during their term of study at Johns Hopkins University. It is important that people who take on instructional responsibilities understand university procedures and policies and also know where to obtain instructional support for their course.

The Solution

The TA Training Institute has a range of offerings from broad-based programs to prepare over 200 graduate students for their immediate teaching assignments to specific programs to prepare individuals for their future academic teaching appointments. Currently there are four components to the TA Training program.

I. TA Orientation for First-time TAs

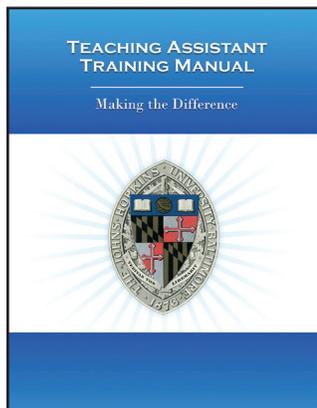
Fall Orientation Week (required session)

Over 200 graduate students attend this morning event TA Orientation. 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. Introductory Topics for First-time TAs

Fall Orientation Week (required session)

The plenary session is followed by an series of seminars covering a variety of issues for first-time TAs – e.g., Preparing for the First Day Supporting a Lab, Leading Effective Discussions, Identifying Resources for Struggling Students, Dealing with Academic Integrity Issues, Teaching with Library Resources, and Teaching with Technology.



Teaching Assistant Manual

TA Manual

The TA Training Institute maintains the graduate teaching manual “Making the Difference”. This is a handbook of information on general teaching resources available at Hopkins – e.g., TA-specific services offered by the library, services offered to students with disabilities, faculty responsibilities in working with such students, etc. The manual also has some general teaching tips specific to the type of teaching they may encounter within their discipline. To obtain a copy of the TA Manual just drop into the Center for Educational Resources office just down the hall from Café Q in MSEL.

Additional Resources

- <http://cer.jhu.edu/teaching-academy/tati>

Author's Background

Richard Shingles,
Department of Biology,



Dr. Richard Shingles is a Faculty lecturer and Curriculum Specialist at Johns Hopkins University. Instrumental in the redesign of the General Biology course, he supports and counsels the faculty, students, and developers of science courses. Having taught undergraduate and graduate students as well as having earned a degree in science education after earning a Ph.D. in Biology, Dr. Shingles is well versed in innovative pedagogical approaches. Dr. Shingles has been the Director of the TA Training Institute at Johns Hopkins University since October 2006.

III. Academic Year Introductory Topics for All TAs

(optional)

A workshop series called “Eyes on Teaching” with repeating topics given at TA orientation plus some additional topics are offered during the academic year. These workshops enable TAs, who would be teaching for the first time in spring semester or teaching a course of their own, to prepare for their teaching assignments. Register at <http://cer.jhu.edu/teaching-academy/events>



IV. Academic Year Teaching Practicum

(elective course)

During the spring semesters a formal course for graduate students, “Preparation for University Teaching” is offered. Open to all graduate students this course engages in peer-to-peer teaching and video recording for critique of teaching practices. Emphasis is on course and lesson preparation, presentation skills, effective facilitation of discussion, and development of self-assessment techniques. The course is offered through KSAS (360.781) and WSE (500.781) and carries one credit.

Teaching Associates Consultations

Support of TA training is important for the long-term sustainability and for the validation of the TA Training program. To enable this, we established a Teaching Associateship; a small group of graduate students who are models for good teaching practices within the university. The Associates worked on maintaining TA training materials, give workshops on teaching and help further their work in advancing knowledge about good teaching. The Associates are employed by the CER for one year starting in June. Applications for Teaching Associates positions are made available starting in April.

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.