GSI Workshop

Professor Todd Fitch
Acknowledgements

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

- Part A: Administration
- Part B: The Students
- Part C: Becoming an Effective GSI
Part A: Administration
Congratulations on being hired as a Haas GSI! In order to become fully eligible (administrative-wise), you’ll need to complete:

- Paperwork (with Rosina Rocco) – please email Rosina rather than dropping in

- The Online Ethics course (first 3 weeks)
  - Required for ALL GSIs
  - http://gsi.berkeley.edu/ethics/index.html
Payment on 1st of the month for 5 months

- Fall Semester: Sept 1 to Jan 1
- Spring Semester: Feb 1 to Jun 1

Direct deposits can be arranged online via BLU: blu.berkeley.edu

Otherwise, look for a check.

- Textbooks & Study.Net
  - Dave Stuckey (S545A, dstuckey@haas.berkeley.edu)

- bCourses
  - ETS Training: Getting Started in bCourses
    - Training Calendar & Register at http://ets.berkeley.edu/bcourses/
    - Faculty member has to give you access
Office Hour Space
- Contact Rosina to reserve F421 for your office hour.
- Please do not use the PhD or MBA lounge to host office hours.

- Lectern keys: Kendall Dockham, S549

- Room Reservations - Contact Rosina Rocco

- Media Equipment - Contact Haas Helpdesk (Helpdesk@haas.berkeley.edu)
Photocopying
- Don’t do big copy jobs yourself
- See the Haas Copy Center Manager in the mailroom
- Get your requests in EARLY
- For small copy jobs, use GSI copy code.

Stationary Supplies: Haas mailroom
- Mailroom: S-545 “Mail & Duplicating Services”
Identifying students of concern

- UC Berkeley has a Students of Concern Committee that receives referrals pertaining to students of concern, collects additional information, and identifies and enacts appropriate strategies for addressing the situation.
- [http://campuslife.berkeley.edu/dean/berkeleycares/committee](http://campuslife.berkeley.edu/dean/berkeleycares/committee)

Referrals through [studentofconcern@berkeley.edu](mailto:studentofconcern@berkeley.edu)

Shooting at Haas in November 2012 was the first time in the 113-year history of Haas an event like this occurred.

In event of emergency call UCPD immediately using 911 or 510-642-3333.

Protocol for being in and surviving an active shooter incident

- [http://police.berkeley.edu/safetyinfo/shooter.html](http://police.berkeley.edu/safetyinfo/shooter.html)
The Union is the organization collectively representing GSIs and readers:

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

- Unit 18
- UC-AFT Local 1474
Part B: The Students
Digital & Social

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

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

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

- Have a lot of experience
- Looking to expand opportunities
- Often looking for the formula
- Grades tend to be less important (although not unimportant)
Part C: Becoming an Effective GSI
The Role

- You are not…
  - The professor
  - The course designer
  - The final arbiter

- You are…
  - Teaching
  - Helping the professor with administrative tasks
  - Grading
GSI Responsibilities

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

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

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

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

- Not excited about teaching (attitude problem)
- Cared more about his/her matters than the class
- Not supporting the instructor (uncooperative)
- Not returning the graded PS/exams on time and in order
- Not showing up in class
- Not putting in the expected number of hours
- Think back through your experiences with GSI's
  ▪ Identify the best GSI you ever had
  ▪ Identify the worst GSI you ever had

- What were the characteristics of the great and the worst GSIs?
The Student Relationship

- Communication is critical
  - bCourses
  - Adobe Connect
  - Skype
  - Google Hangout
  - Be aware when to respond to a single student vs. the entire class

- Connecting with students
- Organize bCourses information
- Be careful about “us vs. the professor”
- Understand where they are having difficulties
Most Frequent Complaints by Students:

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

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

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

- Before Semester Begins
  - Design the section activities to meet the objectives set by the instructor
  - If possible, get your hands on past course section materials

- Prepare well for each section
  - Start preparing EARLY on
  - Know what was covered in class
  - Make a plan, with time allocation
  - Try to be consistent week to week in what you do
  - Think through how to explain things
    - Board plans
    - Examples

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Section Preparation

- Upload materials on course website/bCourses

- Send out prep/reminder e-mails when appropriate

- Before conducting the section, run through a script
  - Even if you’ve taught the section before
  - Teaching is like telling a story (each idea leads to the next, which follows from what came before.)
- While delivering the content, make sure you connect with the students.

  ▪ **How to make sure the students are following?**
    - Make eye contacts
    - Find a “canary”

  ▪ **How to keep the students with you?**
    - Don’t ask “Any questions?”
    - Instead, ask “That was an important point, do you want me to say it again?”,” “That was a lot of steps, should I go through them again?”, etc.

  ▪ **Other tips on interacting with students**
    - Empathy (especially with undergrads)
    - Consistency (Don’t treat students differently; avoid the appearance of partiality)
During the Section

- What to do when you mess up?
  - Accept that you will inevitably mess up at some point
  - Don’t bluff
  - Figure out where you went wrong and explain it, on the spot if you can, after the fact via email or handout if you can’t

- How to deal with English not being your native language
  - Pay particular attention to whether the students are following
  - Be particularly sure you understand their questions
  - Have neat board plans and practice
  - Again, eye contact helps

- In addition to delivering the section content,
  - Get feedback, and relay to professor as needed
  - Communicate status
    - Let failing students know that they need to improve
Grading & Assignments

- Coordinate the grading among all those grading
- How to deal with grading discrepancies
- Return assignments in an ethical way
- bCourses SpeedGrader
- Maintain consistency between papers
  - Randomly select and scan ~20% of the exams before grading
  - “Grade Bins”
  - Space out grading over time (20 per sitting?)
  - Grade anonymously whenever possible
  - Do NOT watch TV while grading!

- Make a “grading key” which accounts for every point
  - Saves time later when arguing about grades
  - Have a re-grade policy (even if only internal)

- Grading class participation can be difficult sometimes
  - Sometimes the instructor will ask you to give participation grades
  - How to measure and record participation grades?
  - Make this policy clear the first day of class
Evaluations

- Evaluations are Important:
  - Evaluations can affect rehire decisions
    - If evaluation scores are too low you’ll need to undergo a rehabilitation plan approved by the Dean’s office
  - Valuable feedback for future teaching improvements
  - Important to Haas rankings among b-schools

- Use mid-semester evaluations (when possible)

- Use office hours as a chance for getting informal feedback
Teaching: Where To Get Help

- Head GSI
  - wgsi@haas.berkeley.edu
  - Campus GSI Center
  - http://gsi.berkeley.edu/resources/index.html

- “The Torch or the Firehose”

- Professor, students, other classes, other GSIs (the good ones!)
Let’s talk through some potential scenarios and how you might handle them:

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

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