The Geography TA
A Handbook for Teaching Assistants in the
Department of Geography
University of California, Santa Barbara

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on being selected to be a Teaching Assistant (TA) in the Department of Geography. Your selection was based on your demonstrated academic excellence and your potential to be an outstanding teacher. The University defines a teaching assistant as “a registered graduate student in full-time residence, chosen for... excellent scholarship and for... promise as a teacher, and serving an apprenticeship under the active tutelage and supervision of a regular faculty member.”

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

All university TAs should be familiar with the contents of TAs as Teachers; international TAs should read The International Teaching Assistant Handbook; and all Geography graduate students should become very familiar with the contents of the Geography Department’s Graduate Student Handbook, available on the Geography Department website. This handbook was prepared to answer many of the questions the Geography Teaching Assistant might have. It has been designed to complement the above-mentioned resources. It does, therefore, concentrate on issues specific to Teaching Assistants in the Geography Department.

This handbook and many other resources are available on the Geography TA Resource Site on GauchoSpace. https://gauchospace.ucsb.edu/courses/

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

POLICY STATEMENT

In the spring of 1990, the Geography Department adopted the following statement of the Roles and Responsibilities for Teaching Assistants. You should study these carefully and communicate any questions you may have about them to your supervising professor.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS (TAs) and SUPERVISING FACULTY MEMBERS

Department of Geography

University of California, Santa Barbara

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The purposes of the following guidelines for Teaching Assistants (the term “Teaching Assistant,” as used in this document, represents collectively all teaching apprentice positions, including Teaching Assistants, Associates, and Teaching Fellows) and supervising faculty are:

• to maintain a high quality of teaching in undergraduate courses;
• to clarify the mutual responsibilities and obligations of the professor and the TA; and
• through apprenticeship, to train graduate students to be educators.
University policy specifies the roles and responsibilities of apprentice personnel. Three principles help clarify these roles and responsibilities:

I. The Teaching Assistant is a ‘student teacher’ selected for his/her scholarship and promise as a teacher. He/she serves an apprenticeship under the active tutelage and supervision of regular faculty members who are responsible for curriculum and instruction in the University.

II. TAs are not to be given sole responsibility for the instructional content of any course, for examinations, for determining the term grade for students, for instructing the entire enrollment of a course, or for the entire instruction of an individual or group of students enrolled in any University course.

III. In order to ascertain the quality of each student teacher’s performance in the full range of his/her assignments and to require improvement when necessary, the faculty member who is responsible for the instruction and grading of students is expected to consult regularly with his/her student assistant(s) and, if appropriate, to visit any course-related recitation and/or laboratory section to which he/she (they) are assigned.

TA assignments are expected to involve an appropriate range of supportive activities, which may include:

- assisting the faculty member in the preparation of course materials;
- teaching in laboratory or discussion sections for the faculty member in charge of the course to which he/she is assigned;
- attending the faculty member’s lectures or other instruction periods;
- reading and grading student papers and examinations;
- assisting with evaluation of students’ performance and assignment of grades; and
- advising students during office hours.

The guidelines for TAs and faculty members in the Department of Geography are based on the following assumptions:

The quality of the undergraduate’s education is best served when Teaching Assistants and faculty members work cooperatively and effectively together. Thus it is the mutual responsibility of the TA and the faculty member to communicate questions and problems to each other regarding teaching materials, techniques, assignments, examinations, students’ response, and other factors that affect the fulfillment of their separate duties.

The concept of apprenticeship means that the faculty member provides “active tutelage” to TAs to help them improve their teaching skills. This must include the communication about content or subject matter of the course and evaluation of and advice about teaching effectiveness. Such feedback must ensure that undergraduates receive instruction of satisfactory quality and could involve the faculty member's direct observation of the TA in section, discussion of students’ written or oral evaluations of the TA, and a review of a TA’s videotaped presentations in section. Advance notice should be given before classroom observation.
Effective teaching by Teaching Assistants demands credibility in their roles as teachers. Thus observations and evaluations of TAs by faculty members must not jeopardize the TAs’ rapport with their students. Evaluations and comments must take place later in confidence.

GUIDELINES

Meetings: Weekly meetings between the faculty member and the course’s Teaching Assistants should be held and should include a review of the upcoming section assignment. These meetings should be scheduled soon enough to allow TAs to prepare for the section and exams. Schedules and due dates should be discussed between faculty and TAs well in advance. The supervising faculty member should inform the TAs about the topics of upcoming lectures so that they can properly prepare for sections and for students’ questions.

Preparation for sections: The supervising faculty member should ensure that the TAs are provided with enough information about the upcoming section assignment that they are confident and secure about their presentation. The faculty member should make the TAs aware of the services available from the University (e.g. through Instructional Development) and share these resources with the TAs. If your laboratory sections require the use of instructional field devices, such as GPS units, please contact the Geography Computing Team well in advance to check out these items without scheduling conflicts with other concurrent course sections.

Examinations and grading: The faculty member should provide answer keys to his/her exams, detailed breakdowns for the assignment of points, and guidelines for grading. This will help ensure that the professor’s emphases and not those of individual TAs are reflected in the grading. It will also contribute to the maintenance of uniformity among the different graders and will help TAs to effectively handle complaints about grading. TAs may be asked to evaluate the quality of the exam before it is given and to identify misleading or confusing questions.

Responsibility for assignment of grades: The supervising faculty member is responsible for instruction and grading in all University courses, including discussion or laboratory sections that accompany lecture courses. Thus, although the TA may write all or portions of the discussion or laboratory section assignments, quizzes, or examinations, the supervising faculty member must check the TAs’ efforts throughout the quarter to maintain academic standards and provide necessary feedback.

Academic Dishonesty: If the TA discovers instances of academic dishonesty for which he/she feels sanctions are justified, the TA must bring the case to the attention of the supervising professor and/or the Department Chair.
Coordinating TAs: While experienced Teaching Assistants may function as valuable resources for other TAs in a course, and may be assigned special duties, the apprenticeship of all TAs is with the supervising faculty member. This does not preclude an organizational structure involving a Coordinating or Head TA in courses with multiple TAs.

Lectures by TAs: The opportunity to give an occasional course lecture may be a welcomed culminating experience for an experienced Teaching Assistant. Such lecturing should be limited in occurrence and carried out under the supervision and guidance of the faculty member. TAs should not be expected to lecture just to substitute for an absent faculty member.

Workload: Assignment of a TA to more than one section of the same course is preferred to splitting a TA’s duties between two courses. A half-time TA’s appointment specifies a 20-hour per week commitment on average. This time includes lecture attendance, weekly meetings, teaching of discussion or laboratory sections, office hours, grading, and preparation of instructional materials. If these duties consistently require more than 20 hours per week for a 50% TA (or 10 hours per week for a quarter-time TA, etc.), the supervising faculty member must choose among the options for the use of a TA’s time and relieve the TA of some duties. All supervising faculty members and TAs should complete a form "Academic Student Employee Responsibilities" at the start of the quarter. This form should be filed with the Student Programs Manager.

Evaluation of TAs: TA evaluation should be an ongoing process throughout the quarter, culminating with written end-of-quarter student reviews. Sources of feedback during the quarter for the TA should include gathering comments from the course instructor and students, as a continuing process of refining teaching skills. The TA should be provided with comments from the instructor after a classroom visitation. The videotaping of discussion/laboratory sections and the follow-up consultation with an Instructional Development staff member is another method for examining teaching strengths and weaknesses. First-quarter TAs often benefit from receiving written mid-quarter evaluations from their students; although they do not become part of the TA's formal record, it may benefit the TA to discuss them with the supervising faculty member. At the end of the quarter, the TA receives written reviews from students, copies of which are given to the TA and to the Department. Based on these evaluations, the supervising faculty member may choose to write a short review of the performance of the TAs in his/her courses.

Feedback to Supervising Faculty Members: Professors should encourage their TAs to provide their own evaluations and information about their students’ perception of the quality of the lectures, audio-visual materials, assignments, discussions, readings, examinations, and any other aspect of the course.

TA’s Commitment: A TA’s appointment is a binding contract for the duration of the quarter. Once instruction has begun, it is unacceptable for a TA to break the contract for any reason except an extreme emergency. TAs are expected to be available throughout the quarter, including the time needed to assign grades after the final examination.
Department’s Commitment: Normally the Department of Geography awards TA positions for specified quarters during an academic year. However, promised employment for quarters later in the year may be revoked for unsatisfactory performance during an earlier quarter. Only in clear cases of incompetence or lack of performance will a TA be dismissed during a quarter.

Criteria for Selection of TAs: To the extent possible, TAs will be assigned assistantships in courses related to their previous and professional training. Two criteria are used to select TAs: academic excellence and potential as a teacher. If the graduate student has had prior teaching experience, evaluation of teaching ability is based on written comments by supervising faculty members and students. Otherwise, evaluation of teaching potential is based on letters of recommendation supporting the student's application to the Department.

Social Relationships with Students: The University does not tolerate sexual harassment, and TAs who subject students to unwanted attention (sexual or otherwise) can expect sanctions. TAs must treat all students fairly and equally, and therefore must avoid personal relationships with students who are currently enrolled in their sections. Sexual Harassment Prevention Training is mandatory for all faculty, graduate students, and TAs: https://oeosh.ucsb.edu/titleix/training/ta.and.graduate.student.sexual.harassment.prevention/

TA Training: All Teaching Assistants new to the Geography Department at UCSB are required to enroll in Geography 500 (GEOG 500), the TA training course, during or before their first quarter as a TA. Part of this includes TA Training Orientation held during Fall orientation. Also, if the student is international, he or she must take the English Language Placement Exam (ELPE). UCSB’s Graduate Division requires international TAs to take the exam, and has authorized the English for Multilingual Students (EMS) Program to administer it. The Student Programs Manager will schedule it around mid-September and will provide details found here: http://www.ems.ucsb.edu/graduate/ta-info. International students must pass the exam(s) prior to TAing.

RESOLUTION OF PROBLEMS

If problems arise about the roles or responsibilities of supervising faculty and TAs, the involved parties should meet with each other to discuss the problem and its resolution. These discussions might involve the TA's Faculty Advisor. If these meetings do not resolve the problem, the TA or supervising faculty member should attempt a resolution of the problem through consultation with the Department Chair, who has the responsibility to resolve matters regarding Department personnel. In addition, TAs and supervising faculty may always consult with the Lead TA or with the faculty member involved in TA training.
LOGISTICS

STUDENT EMPLOYEE AGREEMENT AND TA HIRING LETTER

One of the first things you should do as a TA is accept the TA academic appointment by signing the TA hiring letter that outlines details of the appointment. The Student Programs Manager will send this to you. Next, arrange a time with the Student Programs Manager to sign all appropriate hiring paperwork.

Financial tip: you may choose to have your checks deposited directly into a bank account. Some local banks offer a preferred checking account, bearing interest and with no monthly minimum or fees, for simply signing up for direct deposit.

All assistantship income is taxable, and taxes are automatically deducted. Note, however, that if you are on a “split-appointment” (e.g. a 0.25 TA and a 0.25 GSR) your taxes may be under-withheld. The taxes for your two checks are determined independently, and since both are based on the assumption that you are earning only that amount, not enough will be deducted, and you may owe considerable tax - or even penalties - on April 15th when your total income for the year is considered. Please consult the Graduate Division website: http://www.graddiv.ucsb.edu/financial/tax-information

UAW ACADEMIC STUDENT EMPLOYEE AGREEMENT

Appointees to the titles of Teaching Assistant, Associate in __, Reader, and Remedial Tutor are covered by the Memorandum of Understanding between the University and the UAW. The full contract is available on the Academic Personnel website at: https://ap.ucsb.edu/policies.and.procedures/collective.bargaining.agreements/ and is also referenced in the TA hiring letter.

OFFICE KEYS

Once you are on the payroll, you should obtain your keys from the Academic Personnel and Space Analyst for the Department. You should receive keys to the building (Ellison or Phelps) and to your office and other necessary keys.

ACCESS CONTROL KEYCARDS

You should apply for and acquire your security access control keycards (= Access card) as soon as possible, as these are required to access all of the media teaching spaces throughout the Geography Department outside of scheduled class times. Although the Computing Team schedules these areas to be “green-lighted” (unlocked) at the beginning of each quarter, you may need to access these spaces at other times. Please see the Undergraduate Assistant for the Access card form.
**TEXTBOOKS**

You should see the Undergraduate Assistant or your course instructor to receive copies of all *required* texts for the course you are TAing. In most cases the publisher provides these "desk copies"; when they do not, the department will purchase the texts. You are expected to return all texts to the Undergraduate Assistant at the end of the term. Many times the publisher will provide additional materials, including image sets, teaching manuals, question sets, or software. Speak with the course instructor about obtaining these materials if they apply to your class. The department will not purchase any textbooks that are only *recommended*.

**PHOTOCOPYING AND PRINTING**

As a TA you will receive an account code from the Student Programs Manager for use on the photocopier (1829 Ellison) --- *this is to be used only for TA-related activities*. If you have very large printing jobs (e.g. hundreds of pages), you should plan ahead and ask for advice from office staff on copy services. The office staff can provide supplies for the machines (white or colored paper, toner). You should be sure to arrange for a suitable supply before the Geography office closes at 5 pm. Do not plan on late-night copying or last-minute copying using the Geography Department copier. The copier is guaranteed to break down at the most inconvenient times!

Printers in the Department can be used for TA-related work. For printing class materials and examinations, print one copy on the printer and make duplicates using the photocopier.

**COMPUTERS AND E-MAIL**

All graduate students, faculty, and staff have e-mail accounts and use them daily. Your fellow TAs and supervising faculty will expect to be able to communicate with you via this method. Important departmental notices are often posted on the Department’s website, as well as disseminated via e-mail, usually through the *allgrad@geog.ucsb.edu* listserv. Informal discussions among graduate students take place on the *gradb@geog.ucsb.edu* listserv, which you can request to be added to. If you need help, you should contact the Geography Computing Team: support@geog.ucsb.edu.

TAs who lead a computer lab section should educate themselves and their students about the policies of the computer labs. These policies include the hours that the lab is open, the policy for entering labs during class sessions, access to the lab, the procedure for closing the lab, and the “NO DRINKS AND FOOD” policy.

**OFFICE HOURS**

**SCHEDULING**

All Geography TAs are required to hold office hours. The number of hours varies with the course, the professor, and your appointment. You should ask your supervising faculty
member how many hours to schedule. Ideally, your office hours are at times convenient to you, your students, and your office-mates. Avoid scheduling them during class lecture times or the office hours of the instructor. You might offer your students a few options at the beginning of the term, and choose the best time for all concerned. You should try to schedule your hours to span at least two “time slots” in the university schedule, either overlapping a class break or at different times on different days. Offering to make individual appointments at a time convenient to both you and an individual student will mitigate some scheduling difficulties.

**DOOR CARDS**

Once you have decided on your hours you must fill out an office hour door card. The door card form can be obtained from the Geography website ([http://geog.ucsb.edu/services/other-forms/Instructor-Door-Card.pdf](http://geog.ucsb.edu/services/other-forms/Instructor-Door-Card.pdf)). Please print and post the card outside your office. You should also announce your office hours in your sections several times at the beginning of the term and again before any exam. Your office hours may also be posted on the class syllabus or on GauchoSpace.

**AVAILABILITY**

You are obligated to be available during your office hours. If you must be late one week, or cancel them altogether, you should announce an additional time when you will be available. You might want to schedule additional office hours, or a special review session, before mid-term and the final exams.

**LOCATION**

In some courses it may be useful to hold your office hours elsewhere, e.g., in one of the computer labs or in the Map & Imagery Laboratory (MIL). Regardless of where you hold your office hours, be sensitive to some students’ preferences to not discuss their questions or grades in front of others. You might want to step outside a computer laboratory to discuss a problem in the hallway, or ask other students in your office to wait in the hallway. Please also be considerate of others around you (e.g. office-mates) when organizing your office hours.

**OPEN DOOR POLICY**

During your office hours, your door should remain open. This simple step is an effective safeguard against many uncomfortable situations.

**IN THE CLASSROOM**

The successful TA has a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and goes into the classroom with a well-organized plan for presenting the material. You should keep in mind some of the following ideas.
CONTENT

Be sure to know what you are supposed to present. Discuss this with your supervising faculty and/or other TAs of the course. In a course with multiple TAs, it is most important to coordinate your presentations, grading policies, etc.

Be sure that you understand the material. Do not hesitate to ask the professor or the other TAs any questions; in a discipline as diverse as geography you are not expected to know everything. You may find it helpful to run through every step or question of an exercise before assigning it to your section. This will help you to anticipate questions and problems, and will insure that you understand everything you are asking of the students.

If you are asked a question to which you don't know the answer, admit it, and return with the answer the following week. You might try something like “That's a really good question. It's not explained in the text or the manual, is it? It might be ... but it could also be .... I’ll check on it and let you know next week.”

Be sure to distinguish factual material from opinion or speculation. Present opposing theories or viewpoints, when appropriate. Avoid expressing partisan political positions -- their expression can create a harassing environment for some students.

ORGANIZATION

You may find it useful to enter each section with a detailed outline of what you plan to cover in that class. This will not only improve the organization of your presentation and prevent the omission of important topics, but will give you something to ‘fall back on’ should you get flustered or distracted.

Take care of the administrative details at the very beginning of class -- reminders of your office hours and upcoming exams, returning and collecting assignments, etc. Summarize what you plan to cover that day, stating the purpose of that particular lecture/discussion, or demonstrating how this information could be used to answer a certain ‘real-world’ problem. You might put an outline of the material on the chalkboard or overhead at the outset of class, or develop one as you go.

Explain how the new material is related to that presented in the previous session or in the main lecture. Make smooth transitions between topics, and explain how they are related. Emphasize or restate the most important ideas. Encourage students to ask questions, and answer them. As the end of the class approaches, summarize what was covered, what they should have learned, and what they are to do next. Conclude with a finale -- a closing suggestion, question, or fact.

PRESENTATION

Speak in a clear, strong voice that can be easily heard. Ask students to sit near the front if you think they need to. Vary the tone and volume of your voice, for variety and
emphasis (and to keep them awake!). Speak slowly enough to let the students take notes. Talk to the class, not the board or windows. Maintain eye contact. Be enthusiastic.

Define new terms, concepts, and principles. Do not assume that students know the background material, or that they have read the text or laboratory manual. Give many examples, illustrations, or applications to clarify abstract concepts. Slow down when discussing difficult concepts. Keep digressions constrained and limited.

Use good quality handouts and visual aids. Show up before class to put a complex diagram on the whiteboard/chalkboard, or make an overhead or PowerPoint slide of it. You can make black-and-white overheads on the copier machine in the department office, though using the in-classroom ceiling-mounted projectors is highly recommended. Write legibly and clearly on the board and on transparencies.

Use maps or globes whenever appropriate; some can be borrowed from the Map & Imagery Laboratory (MIL) which is part of Davidson Library, and others can be borrowed from individuals in the department.

INTERACTION

Ask questions to determine what the students know, need to have repeated, etc. Ask the questions in the ‘right direction’, so that they can admit ignorance without embarrassment, e.g. “How many of you understand ...” instead of “How many of you don’t understand...” Ask questions in different ways. Address some questions to individuals, but not always the same ones; when asking questions of the class be sure to invite responses from all corners of the classroom, not just a small region near the front or side. Encourage students to answer difficult questions by providing cues or rephrasing. Always wait five to ten seconds for students to respond; while waiting you might use the board to pause, provide clues, etc.

Show enthusiasm for their questions. Dignify all student questions and answers, regardless of correctness. Note and respond to signs of puzzlement or boredom. Try to make all students feel comfortable in class. Avoid comments that are sexist, racist, or otherwise demean members of protected classes of individuals -- they can create a harassing environment.

TAs are human, and they occasionally make mistakes. The students will discover your error, either immediately or when completing a lab or taking an exam. You can correct your error and save (some) face at the same time: “Lab 4 is not due today -- you have until Friday to turn it into my mailbox. The reason is that there was a mistake in my explanation of warm and cold fronts last week. To be honest, I can never keep those two straight, and always have to look it up before coming to section. Well, this time I looked it up in an outdated edition of the text, where they had it backwards.” Or, you could just say “I made a mistake last week...”.

EMERGENCIES

Know the best route out of the building in the event of a fire. Be prepared to lead your students down the stairwells. Do not use elevators.
In the event of an earthquake, cover your head and protect your body until the shaking stops. Then exit the building and proceed to the emergency assembly point (usually the nearest open area) in an orderly manner. Do not use elevators. Do not stand near buildings.

**GRADING PAPERS AND EXAMS**

**PROFESSOR EXPECTATIONS**
Almost all TAs will be asked to take a significant role in the grading of lab exercises, papers, and/or exams. Be sure that it is clear at the outset between you and your supervising professor how much grading will be expected, as well as what sort of grades he or she wants from you (letters, with or without +’s and -‘s, or numbers on a certain scale).

**EXAM PREPARATION**
In some classes you may be asked to help prepare an exam by providing some or all of the questions. Consider the wording of your questions carefully. Make sure that the question is clear, and that there is only one correct answer. Consult *Improving Multiple-Choice Tests* (Clegg and Cashin, Kansas State University) or *Improving College Grading* (Hanna and Cashin, Kansas State University) or GauchoSpace resources for additional information on test questions and grading systems.

Often you will be asked to help prepare an answer key, or one may be provided to you. In either case, be sure that you and the professor (and any other TAs for the course) agree on all of the answers -- it is far easier to correct a key than it is to correct 100 exam grades.

**OBJECTIVITY**
As you are grading, remain as objective as possible. Grade all copies of a given page or question at once to improve the probability of being consistent across that page. You probably don’t need to see the students’ names while grading, or even their answers to other questions. Avoiding knowing the students’ identities on the exams makes for fairer grading. Avoid ordering the exams as you sift through them, as this could bias your grading.

Be on the lookout for consistently wrong answers, which might indicate an error in the key, the text, the class notes, or one of the TA’s (or professor's) lectures. Also be leery of pairs of exams or exercises that are remarkably similar.

**DISCUSSING GRADES**
Be clear with your students about what their grade means. Do not let them assume that “90% or better is an A” unless you plan to grade that way (many students have come from such systems in high school, and are surprised that a 92 isn’t automatically an A, or
that a 57 could be a B+). Be careful when assigning letter grades to exercises or mid-terms -- do not let yourself get into the situation where a student just barely ekes out a certain grade on each of the exams or exercises, but then gets a lower grade when all are considered together. Be very careful to not falsely encourage a student that his or her grade will improve. If you are not sure how to address a student’s question, do not hesitate to say, “I’ll talk with the instructor and get back to you with an answer.” or something along those lines.

**ANTICIPATE GRADING TIME**

Finally, anticipate the additional time that grading papers or exams will require. It is not unusual for the group of Geography 3 or 5 TAs to get together for a very long evening, or an entire Saturday or Sunday, to do nothing but grade exams. Budget your time accordingly.

**VIDEOTAPING**

All Geography TAs are **strongly** encouraged to be videotaped by the 8th week of their first quarter of a TA appointment, and are encouraged to do it once per term thereafter. The service is provided free by the Office of Instructional Development and includes a professional consultation with someone from their staff. Due to high demand for this service, it is sometimes not possible to schedule this during fall quarter. Please plan ahead and make appointments as early as possible. You should schedule your videotaping early in the quarter to avoid the scheduling rush toward the end of the quarter and to give yourself time to respond to what you observe.

http://oic.id.ucsb.edu/consulting-services/classroom-videotaping-consultation

The videotape and consultation are confidential. Your tape will not be shown to anyone else unless you sign a voluntary release form.

*The videotaping program is widely regarded as one of the most valuable experiences in learning to be a good TA. Please take advantage of it.* Seeing and hearing yourself from the students’ perspective is valuable, enlightening, and often entertaining. (You can have a copy of your tape made to show friends and family for years to come; simply ask the Consultation office.)

The Department of Geography also maintains video-recording equipment. If you would like to be videotaped but are unable to schedule it through the Office of Instructional Development, please contact the Geography IT Team to borrow equipment.

**EVALUATIONS**

All academic departments at UCSB are required to collect course evaluations for all courses and sections as an independent and anonymous way for students to give feedback without fear of grade retribution. This feedback can help instructors and TAs improve their course or section. Instructional Development processes these evaluations, as part of a system known as ESCI (Evaluation System for Courses and Instruction).
Quarterly faculty and TA ESCI evaluations are an integral part of this program and are required for all courses and all discussion/lab sections.

You should coordinate the administration of course evaluations with the instructor and other TAs of the same course. Near the end of the quarter you will receive a packet of evaluation forms in your mailbox. You should distribute these in your last or next-to-last session and permit your students at least 15 minutes to complete the evaluations and make comments. You might invite comments about a particular facet of your teaching or about something you changed this quarter and are curious about whether the students thought it worthwhile. Many times this will inspire students to make additional written comments. Ask one of the students to collect the forms and carry them to the department office (1832 Ellison). You should have no contact with the forms once they are distributed to your students.

Remember that the primary purpose of these evaluations is to help you become a better teacher. Within eight weeks after the end of the quarter you will receive a summary of your evaluations, as well as any of the forms that contained hand-written comments. The numerical summaries will be compared with the department averages over the current quarter and over the past 5 years, as well as with the campus average over the past 5 years.

**TEACHING DIVERSE STUDENTS**

You will quickly discover that Geography appeals to a wide variety of students, and you will get that variety in your sections. Be prepared for students with widely varying backgrounds, ranging from those who have had no geography and a minimum of math or science, to others with years of geography and a strong science background. You also will have students of all ages and from many different cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

The majority of your students will regard you as an authority figure. They will depend on you to facilitate their learning, and they will have respect for your right and ability to do that. These students are relatively easy to teach.

There will also be some students that present you with special challenges. You should be prepared for these. Be wary of *silent students* who might speak only when the answer is obvious, or not at all. You might encourage these students by initiating conversation before or after class, perhaps even asking them to raise a particular question or provide an answer. You can, of course, always call on individuals.

Be on the lookout for *discouraged students* -- those who are easily frustrated by the assignments or exercises. These students might stop coming to section. Express your concern to these students. If a student becomes increasingly depressed or behaves erratically, you may offer to talk with them outside of class. If clearly appropriate, you may provide this information for the campus Counseling Center: (805) 893-4411 or http://www.counseling.ucsb.edu/.
Beware of **snipers** -- underachievers or those with inflated values of their own knowledge who might translate their dislike for course topics into dislike of the TA. These students might confront you in class, or mutter criticisms to their neighbors. One popular ploy is to object to a particular exam question that many people missed, and then cajole the class into attacking you. Stand your ground against these students; you are the TA.

Finally, beware of **flakes** -- students who surf the Internet or do other work while in your class, students who routinely show up late or leave early, and students who ask questions that are either completely irrelevant or were just explained in detail. Don’t hesitate to confront these students about their distracting actions and bring them to the instructor’s attention as needed.

**ETHICS**

**PROFESSIONALISM**

Remember that you are in a position of power, and with that power comes many responsibilities. You are expected to act professionally, on all fronts. This can prove to be quite a challenge, especially when some of your students are your peers or perhaps older than you.

Be wary of inadvertent discrimination. Do not prejudge students, or treat them differently in any way, on the basis of their color, gender, or preferences. This applies at all times when you are lecturing, grading, or walking down the hallway. If you have any questions regarding possible discrimination you may contact the Women’s Center, the Multicultural Center, or the Office of Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment Prevention. Information about all of these offices is available online.

**STUDENT ASSISTANCE**

While grading assignments or simply interacting with students, it is possible that you encounter a particular individual who is having difficulty keeping up or expressing thoughts. There are a number of groups on campus that can help these individuals. The Campus Learning Assistance Services (CLAS) can help students improve their study and paper writing skills and provide tips on how to prepare for exams. The University also has a tutorial service that students can use to get extra instruction in specific classes, including geography. For further information on CLAS, call 893-3269 or visit CLAS (http://www.clas.ucsb.edu/). The Disabled Students Program serves students with disabilities and provides tutoring services and note taking for students with learning and physical disabilities (http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu).

**QUESTIONS?**

We have tried to make this handbook as complete as possible, but there may be things we have missed. If you still have questions or are unsure about something, please do not hesitate to ask! There are many good resources all around you, including your supervising faculty instructor, your faculty advisor, the department chair, the graduate advisor, the Department’s Lead TA, and the TA training faculty member. Just ask!