

Department of History and Philosophy

Guidelines for Undergraduate Teaching Assistants

Approved 11 March 2014

Consistent with our dedication to excellence in undergraduate education, undergraduate teaching assistantships are offered for course credit through HIST 4400 and PHIL 4400 – Directed Study. Besides providing support to faculty, undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs) are given the opportunity to develop significant mentoring relationships with their faculty supervisor and gain significant skills and insight into the academic profession. Additionally, UTAs enhance the undergraduate learning experience and provide a varied body of experience to the courses they support. The results of this opportunity put the UTAs at a unique advantage when applying to graduate school and to other post-baccalaureate endeavors. Each assistantship is unique, tailored to both the individual UTA's skills and knowledge and to the faculty member's needs.

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1 Faculty Eligibility

Only full-time faculty members are eligible to supervise UTAs.

2. Key Department Policies

- The mix of activities for UTAs must have a significant percentage that has discernible pedagogical benefit. Put another way, UTAs may not be used only, or even overwhelmingly, for clerical activities. Proposed contracts that do not describe

activities with a significant level of pedagogical benefit will not be approved by the chair.

- UTA Faculty supervision of UTA HIST 4400 and PHIL 4400 courses will not count toward faculty teaching reassign-time.
- Students may not substitute UTA HIST 4400 and PHIL 4400 courses for existing regular courses. See other limitations in Section 7.

3. Potential Activities of UTAs

The UTAs' activities may include but would not be limited to:

Interacting with students

- Preparing/presenting learning modules/lectures (Presentations would be supervised by the instructor of record and limited to one or two per semester.)
- Tutoring and supplemental instruction (e.g., review sessions)
- Assisting with in-class activities
- Assisting with outside-class activities
- Facilitating study groups
- Conducting online discussion groups
- Commenting on/critiquing/proofreading assignments prior to submission
- Assisting with questions regarding computer-assisted technology

Developing teaching-related skills

- Assisting in syllabus preparation
- Assisting the instructor in preparation of class assignments or critiquing/proofreading assignments prior to distribution to class
- Exploring basic issues related to teaching (e.g., reading pedagogical resources) and discussing them with supervisor
- Developing a philosophy of teaching

- Collaborating with the instructor on activities linked to the scholarship of teaching (e.g., evaluating the effectiveness of a class exercise) including collecting data, setting up data files and entering data, and conducting data analysis
- Collaborating with the instructor on test item analysis, including setting up data files, entering data, and conducting data analysis
- Assisting the instructor in developing grading rubrics
- Assisting the instructor in preparation of quizzes or exams

Providing evaluative feedback to the instructor on student-submitted assignments

- Finding specifically defined errors in papers (e.g., Chicago Manual of Style – Humanities Form footnote and bibliographic citations, content missing) based on checklists developed with or by instructor and approved by instructor
- Marking errors on multiple choice/fill-in-the-blank/short answer combination exam answer sheets
- Grading objective, structured examinations, homework, and lab assignments based on checklists developed with or by instructor and approved by instructor.

Clerical

- Entering data collected by students as part of a research assignment (e.g., in the History research sequence) into a single file for subsequent analysis by students
- Taking and keeping records of attendance
- Photocopying course-related materials
- Photocopying exams
- Proctoring exams
- Alphabetizing exams after collected
- Running exams through Scantron
- Entering grades other than final course grades in grade book

4. Note on Grading:

The assignment of grades to essay examinations and research papers is not within the purview of an undergraduate assistant. However, this does not preclude an assistant from grading the more objective coursework (e.g., multiple-choice/short answer/fill-in-the-blank questions). When UTAs are grading student work or exam materials, it is recommended that student work be identified by code number rather than by name as an added protection for maintaining confidentiality. Regardless of the activity, faculty are ultimately responsible for all grades. Furthermore, all students are advised, preferably by a statement in the syllabus, that any concerns related to grades (involving either UTAs or instructors) should be brought directly to the instructor's attention. Similarly, all students are advised and encouraged to bring any concerns regarding UTA activities directly to the instructor.

5. Application for and Approval of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistantship

All applicants for an undergraduate teaching assistantship must be History, History Education, or Philosophy majors with a minimum overall GPA of 3.0 and a minimum History GPA of 3.5 or a Philosophy GPA of 3.0 in all major courses (lower and upper division).

Additionally, before the UTA position begins, students must have completed the following courses:

History and History Education UTAs: HIST1110, HIST2111, HIST2112, and HIST2270/2271 and at least 24 credits of upper division coursework, of which at least 9 credits are in HIST courses.

Philosophy UTAs: PHIL2200, PHIL 2300 PHIL 2700, and either PHIL 2100 or PHIL 2110 and at least 24 credits of upper division coursework, of which at least 9 credits are in PHIL courses.

History and History Education majors should only apply to TA in courses that they have already completed, unless the faculty member can make a compelling case regarding the student's suitability. Philosophy majors may only serve as a TA for PHIL2200.

Other qualifications are dependent on the particular assistantship and faculty member's needs.

Faculty announcements direct interested students to a listing of available assistantships and an application form on the department Web page. As part of the application, potential applicants acknowledge that they meet minimal qualifications (e.g., GPA, History courses taken, faculty references). Completed applications are forwarded to the respective faculty members for review, confirmation of minimal qualifications, and interview of qualified applicants. During the interview, the faculty member and the potential UTA discuss how the potential UTA's background is commensurable with the faculty member's conception of the type of assistance needed. Areas of discussion might include academic background, competence, specific skills, ability to work well with other students, availability, and personality characteristics (e.g., willingness to accept criticism and make adjustments). If the faculty member concludes that the potential UTA could perform effectively as an assistant, the faculty member and potential UTA would agree on the specific duties involved.

6. The Directed Study Contract

Next, the faculty would prepare a draft contract detailing:

- the timeframe for the assistantship,
- a draft syllabus for the course in which the student would TA
- activities and responsibilities of the UTA,
- responsibilities of the supervising faculty member, and
- method of evaluation of the UTA (e.g., course grade, evaluation letter, feedback from students served).

Both the UTA and faculty member sign the contract.

The contract, together with a Confidentiality Agreement signed by the potential UTA, would be forwarded to the department chair for review in consultation with the Department Faculty Council. To assist the chair and DFC in the review process, the proposed contract would include a cover page indicating, at a minimum, the following standard information:

- Student's name
- Student's KSU number
- Supervising faculty member's name
- Course name(s), section(s), and semester(s) for which assistance is proposed
- Student's declared major(s) and minor(s)
- Current History GPA
- Overall GPA
- Demographic information (This information will assist in supporting diversity representation in our assistantship programs.)

Approval of the chair is required prior to implementing the assistantship. The assistantship is limited to the activities approved by the chair and the timeframe noted in the contract. Extensions of activities or timeframe need prior approval from the chair. University policies are followed regarding approval for course credit (e.g., submission of course syllabus along with contract).

7. Benefits of and to the UTA

UTAs enhance the undergraduate learning experience and provide a varied body of experience to General Education, core disciplinary requirements, and upper division courses. Benefits to the UTA include the training received and development of a mentoring relationship. UTAs also receive course credit (HIST 4400 Directed Study in History or PHIL 4400 Directed Study in Philosophy 1 to 3 hours credit) based on the nature of the assistantship. Course credit ensures accountability on the part of the student participating in the program. Credits will be used as Upper Level Electives (Area IIIB) in the History Major. History majors may use no more than six total credits of HIST4400 UTA toward the BA. There is currently no place in the History Education curriculum for these credits. History Ed students who wish to have the experience at a UTA would likely have to treat the resulting credits as unused upper level credits for the purposes of the History Ed degree.

8. Training of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant

Given the varying skills that the UTAs bring to the opportunity and the needs of the supervising faculty member, training of UTAs is accomplished by the individual supervising faculty member. Prior to the beginning of the assistantship, whether or not the contract includes grading responsibilities, initial training includes discussion of issues relevant to the ethics of teaching (e.g., confidentiality, test security). Training continues throughout the assistantship via regular meetings between the UTA and the supervising faculty member. In addition to discussing any difficulties perceived by either the supervising faculty member or UTA, the UTA is encouraged to ask questions about the experience or issues related to teaching. The meetings are structured to reflect a mentoring/supervisory relationship.

9. Other Policies Related to Undergraduate Teaching Assistantships

9.1 Students served by UTAs are aware that UTAs are closely supervised by faculty. This awareness is typically achieved via a statement made available to the students (e.g., in the course syllabi, on the course Web page). An example of one such statement follows:

Undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs) are sometimes used in this course. These individuals provide an array of assistance and are directly supervised by the instructor. UTAs sign contractual agreements regarding their work in the course and have been approved by the department chair. All concerns relating to UTAs should be brought to the instructor's attention. Students submit their concerns regarding UTAs to the instructor in writing and with supporting documentation. UTAs sign and adhere to a professional confidentiality and responsibility statement similar to that signed by all faculty. UTAs are ethically and legally obligated to maintain confidentiality regarding student information and share information only with the instructor and those legally entitled to the information.

9.2 As part of the assistantship contract, UTAs complete the "Acknowledgment of Professional Confidentiality and Responsibility" form (a modified Buckley form) regarding confidentiality of student records. This form is attached to their contract. A copy of this form remains on file with the supervising faculty member for the duration of the assistantship. An additional copy remains on file with the department as statutorily required.