

Teaching Assistant and Reader Handbook

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1. Introduction

This handbook is intended to help new TAs and Readers in the UCSD Communication Department to navigate their jobs. It is not comprehensive, but hopefully subsequent generations of Senior TAs, TAs, and Readers will add to it based on their own experiences and changes in the department and in university policies. It supplements other materials provided by the [Teaching + Learning Commons](#). Therefore, this manual does not cover all the university-wide policies pertaining to TAs, but it covers a lot of information specific to TAing in the Communication Department. References to other resources are included as well. If in your experience you find parts of the handbook inaccurate or inadequate, please let the current Senior TA know. The first edition of this handbook was written by Jericho Burg (Senior TA 2004-2005), but it is a cumulative effort, and as things change it will need to be updated (last revision by Jonathan Walton in Fall 2018). Furthermore, this handbook is intended as a set of guidelines or advice, rather than a source of definitive policy. Much of what is in it, when put into practice, is subject to negotiation between the individuals involved. It should be taken in this spirit.

Depending on whether you are a TA for a course with discussion sections (e.g. COMM 10, COMM 101, COMM 100A, 100B, or 100C), a TA for a “sectionless” course, or a Reader, different parts of the handbook will be useful to you. Readers, for example, are not required to hold office hours, but do a substantial amount of grading for the course. The handbook is designed to be used selectively for this reason. The handbook does not yet contain a lot of information specific to COMM 101, but hopefully that will be added to it by Senior TAs with experience in that course.

Being a TA or Reader in the Communication Department can be both rewarding and frustrating. As a reader, you get to know students through their written work, but you don't get to speak to them about it or take part in the teaching. As a TA, on the other hand, you are often the main point of contact for the undergraduates. Many of them will graduate without ever speaking one-on-one with a professor. They will often remember you as their teacher, not the course instructor. At the same time, you are not in charge of the course, and you often don't have much say over what gets taught and how, except in your own discussion section, which is a frustratingly short 50 minutes per week. Keeping your sense of humor is crucial, and if you have any difficulties, remember that you can always consult your Senior TA, other graduate student TAs, or the course instructor. Being a TA or Reader provides you with important hands-on training experience, so makes the most of it, have fun and always remember: You are smart enough to do this, and you're more than up to the job.

2. Work Expectations and Workload

As a TA or Reader in the Communication Department, you play an active role in undergraduate education, regardless of the specifics of your assignment. Your responsibilities vary considerably depending on your position (more detailed position descriptions are given below). Essentially, you are a professor in training, and this is the only training you are likely to get. To a significant degree, faculty and undergrads will expect you to do whatever it takes to get the job done well, but there are workload regulations that you can follow to help you keep a balance between being a part-time TA or Reader and a full-time Ph.D. student. You will also be given a *Description of Duties* at the beginning of each quarter in which you are a TA or Reader that will outline what is expected of you. This form is included in the appendix for your reference, and is available online through the Grad Division website. You may bring it to your instructor if they do not provide it to you.

Workloads are established by the agreement covering Academic Student Employees negotiated between the University of California and the UAW Local Union 2865. The particulars of each position are given below. In general, the union agreement stipulates that 50 percent TAs (the typical TA assignment) shall not work more than 220 hours per quarter. They should not work more than 40 hours in any one week, and the number of hours they work in excess of 20 hours per week may not exceed 50 hours per quarter. In practice, few TAs keep such close track of their hours, but it is a good idea to be aware of how much you are working to make sure that you are not working more than you are being paid for. (A form for tracking work hours is included in the appendix.)

Readers are paid on an hourly basis. They are typically hired to work 10 hours per week and 110 hours per quarter, though most of their workload is concentrated around the timing of exams and assignments.

Instructors of Record (graduate students who teach their own classes) are also covered by the union agreement and are responsible for the normal workload of the course.

If you feel that you are working far more than the specified workload for your position, you are entitled to file a complaint under Article 12 of the UAW and UC agreement. However, before taking formal action, please consider discussing your workload with fellow TAs, the senior TA, or, if you feel comfortable doing so, the course instructor. If you decide to take formal action, you are entitled to a representative during the complaint procedure. The initial step of the procedure would be to submit a written complaint to the department chair and the supervisor. This is followed by a meeting called by the department chair with the concerned parties, followed by a written notification of the decision. The details of the procedure are outlined in the union agreement.

As an Academic Student Employee, you are covered by the union agreement whether or not you fill out a union card, and you are entitled to union protection. Please see the [current union agreement](#), valid through June 30, 2022.

2.1 Readerships

Readerships are typically 25 percent time or 10 hours per week, 110 hours per quarter. Normally, courses that have between 60 and 80 undergraduates enrolled have Readers. Readers are required to read assigned course reading and grade a certain percentage – currently 66 percent or two-thirds– of the papers and exams for a course. They are typically expected to attend all classes. In the Communication Department, Readers do not hold office hours, conduct exam reviews, or carry out other duties normally assigned to TAs. Normally, the professor handles all interaction with the undergraduate students. Readers thus have considerably less responsibility than TAs, in keeping with their substantially lower salaries. Readers also do not register for COGR 500, and therefore do not get course credit for their work. They are, however, entitled to the same fee remissions as TAs.

2.2 Sectionless TAs

Courses that generate enough enrollment (typically over 80 students enrolled) are assigned a sectionless TA. If the class has more than 160 undergraduates, two TAs might be assigned, or a combination of TAs and readers. If the enrollment is somewhere in between, it may be necessary to assign either a 75 percent TA or one 50 percent TA and one 25 percent TA, with the workload divided accordingly. Otherwise, sectionless TAs are typically appointed at 50 percent time, 20 hours per week and no more than 220 hours per quarter. Sectionless TAs do not involve leading student discussion sections, but all other TA responsibilities apply. These include attending all lectures, meeting with the course instructor as required, grading papers and exams, helping to write exams or other assignments, holding office hours, conducting exam reviews, proctoring exams, or fulfilling other duties as discussed with the course instructor. TAs may also be asked to give occasional lectures or otherwise substitute if the course instructor is unavailable. If you are the sole TA for the course, you should expect to grade at most 80 percent of the papers, and the instructor should grade at least 20 percent. If there are two TAs, the instructor should still grade a certain percent of the papers, while the rest are divided between the two of you. Sectionless TAs should register for four units of COGR 500 (under the course instructor's section). TAs from 25 percent level of effort on up are entitled to fee remissions, including their Student Health Insurance Plan premium, Educational and Registration fees, and other fees set forth in the UC-UAW agreement.

2.3 TAs with Sections

TAs with assigned discussion sections are normally 50 percent time, or 20 hours per week and no more than 220 hours per quarter. They are usually assigned two discussion sections per week (50 minutes each; three hours each in the case of COMM 101), and ideally with a maximum official enrollment limit of 26 students per section (20 in the case of COMM 101).

TAs can also work 25 percent time, with only one section per week, or 75 percent time, with three per week. More information on sections is included in “Teaching Sections,” below. In addition to sections, TAs are responsible for attending all classes, attending weekly TA meetings with fellow TAs and the course instructor, holding office hours, proctoring exams, and other responsibilities decided with the course instructor. TAs may also be asked to give occasional lectures or otherwise substitute if the course instructor is unavailable, or hold exam review sessions with their individual sections or with several combined sections. TAs with sections should register for four units of COGR 500 (under the course instructor’s section). TAs with sections are entitled to the same fee remissions as sectionless TAs.

2.4 TAing for Media Production Courses

TAs assisting with a media production course like Comm 101 are expected to demonstrate a high level of competence and experience in the appropriate technologies and methods, and undergo additional equipment training with the Media Center. During section meetings, on top of their standard duties, these TAs guide and oversee hands-on student work on media production projects.

2.5 Summer TAships

The Communication Department also offers some TAships during the summer, though not always enough for every student that wants to serve as a Summer TA. Typically these TAships will be for the core courses in the major – Comm 10, 100A, B, and C. Summer TAships are exactly the same as TAships during the academic year, but all summer courses are completed in 5 weeks, so the pace of instruction is increased and the length of course and section meetings is essentially doubled. There are two Summer Sessions, Session I and Session II, which follow back-to-back in the summer with just a few weeks separating them from the quarters of the academic year.

2.6 Associate-In (Teaching a Course)

If you have qualified and advanced to candidacy, you are eligible to serve as an Associate (often called an “Associate-In”) – teaching your own course. Near the end of the academic year, course proposals will be accepted for the following year. There is also a similar call to propose Summer courses, sent out in Fall quarter. You typically must qualify *by the date that proposals are due* in order to propose a course. Note that not all proposed courses are necessarily accepted, and Associate positions have to be approved by the Department Chair and Deans.

Associates propose and teach Communication courses that are already listed in the [UCSD course catalog](#). There are some “topics” courses that can serve as a way to design your own unique course, but the Department needs to fill all offered courses. Teaching courses that get broad interest from students takes precedent over teaching something narrowly focused on your own research. In the summer, this can mean teaching Comm 10 or 100A, B, or C, which are

requirements for the major.

According to UCSD guidelines, each Associate is assigned a faculty mentor to provide guidance and training as needed, but otherwise you are in charge of the entire course, including supervision of TAs (if the course is big enough to have them). You write the syllabus, often drawing on previous syllabi for the same course. You put together a list of readings and assignments. You give all the lectures and lead all class discussions/activities. You also hold office hours, answer emails, grade assignments, and do everything else that you are used to doing as a TA. At the end of the course, you determine and send in the final grades.

2.7 Waitlisted Students

You may be approached by students on your section's wait list, asking to enroll. TAs may decide (in consultation with the course instructor) if they approve of wait listed student(s) enrolling in their sections. Before you make a decision, keep in mind the upper limits on TA workload (discussed in section 2). You may not allow additional student(s) to enroll if doing so would require work beyond those limits. You should also consider, with the instructor, the seating capacity of the lecture hall and discussion section room. If adding a student would mean exceeding this capacity, you should not allow the student to enroll off of the waitlist. If you would like to allow a waitlisted student(s) to enroll in your section, please send an email to the department's Undergraduate Student Services Advisor, including your section ID and the student's name, before the quarterly date that automatic wait lists officially end.

2.8 Scheduling Sections

Before the quarter begins, TAs will need to arrange their section schedule from the available times. While an email will be sent from the Graduate Coordinator to initiate this process, all negotiation of section schedules should be worked out amongst TAs themselves. It can be challenging to accommodate everyone's preferences for section times, so TAs should be willing to exercise some flexibility to support each other's legitimate scheduling conflicts.

2.9 Senior TA

Senior TAs are nominated by faculty and chosen by the Graduate Affairs Committee based on a combination of factors, including teaching history and ability. They receive a small additional stipend. The additional responsibilities of Senior TAs in the Communication Department currently include organizing and holding the TA training session in the beginning of the year, and for new TAs starting throughout the year, as well as solving any TA-related problems that arise during the year. They also act as a liaison to the Learning + Teaching Commons. The Senior TA is the first contact in cases of disputes or other problems that TAs and Readers may experience. The Senior TA is also a general resource person for TAs, and can observe sections and provide TAs with advice on general and specific teaching problems. Other projects arise as well, either under the Senior TAs initiative or at the suggestion of others in the department. The Senior TA may also serve as the graduate representative to the department's Undergraduate Committee, which makes decisions about undergraduate teaching.

2.10 TAing Outside the Communication Department

Once you have exhausted the guaranteed years of funding listed in your acceptance letter to the Communication PhD program, you have a few choices: (1) find outside grant or fellowship funding that will cover both tuition and living expenses, (2) work with department staff to continue to TA in the department, or (3) look for TAships outside of the Communication Department.

There are some programs on campus that do not have their own PhD students and regularly look for TAs and Readers, such as Urban Studies and Critical Gender Studies. There are also TAships available in some language programs if you have near-fluency in a foreign language. The most common non-Communication TAships are in the required writing courses in the various undergraduate colleges [Writing Programs](#). Each Writing Program is unique and requires different things of the TAs that teach there, so ask around and educate yourself about the programs before applying.

3. Teaching Sections

The purpose of discussion sections is to extend the material presented in lectures and in course readings and allow undergraduates the chance to talk about course topics in detail. Often, with lecture courses, it is the only chance they will have to present their own interpretations and ideas. However, because they are used to lecture-format classes, getting discussions rolling can be challenging. Students may even express a preference for lecture; it is up to you to let them know that that is not what sections are for. The theory behind discussion sections is that students will learn more effectively given the chance to discuss ideas in small groups than they would in a lecture-only format. Discussion sections also give the TA a chance to assess the students' progress in the course, to see which concepts or readings are giving the students difficulty, and to address these difficulties as well as inform the course instructor of them.

If you have never had a course with sections before, what to do in your own sections may be a mystery to you. Likewise, if you have never taught before, you may feel unsure about what you should be doing. However, by the end of your first quarter of teaching, you will feel like an old pro. Even so, the process of learning how to teach well is an ongoing one, and even TAs with lots of experience still feel like they have a lot to learn. This section of the handbook will go over some of the things you will have to do in your sections, as well as give some ideas for different ways to organize your discussions. The Learning + Teaching Commons has a lot of resources you can refer to as well, and your fellow TAs are also a wellspring of knowledge about teaching sections.

If you are nervous about teaching your first section, it might help to sit in on a more experienced TA's section before you have to teach, either the quarter before you are planning to teach or, if this is not possible, sometime during the first week of classes. At the very least, you will likely find yourself feeling quite reassured as you watch and think to yourself, "This is easy! I can do that." Most TAs would be happy to have you sit in on their section if you ask. Sitting in on other TA's sections is even a good experience for more experienced TAs, as it offers fresh perspectives, new ways of framing old ideas, or alternative teaching practices worth giving a try.

3.1 Before the Class Begins

Before or during the first week of classes, the course instructor will usually hold a TA meeting. You and your fellow TAs may have already decided which sections you are going to teach via email, but a number of other things should be decided before the course begins. The course syllabus and your section syllabi should describe the course attendance policy and grading policy (i.e. how grade clarifications and "challenges" will be handled), so these should be discussed ahead of time. The course instructor might also want to go over the syllabus with you, ask you for suggestions, and discuss the number and spacing of assignments and exams. You may also want to talk about the first week of class and what to cover during your first sections. This is also a good time to ask the course instructor questions about his or her expectations for what sections should be like, and anything else you feel unsure about.

3.2 Your First Section Meeting

The first section meeting is likely to be the most hectic. You have a lot of administrative stuff to take care of (taking attendance, explaining section policies, etc.), as well as setting the tone for future sections, beginning to develop your rapport with your students, and even doing some teaching. No matter how pressured you feel to get things done, it is a good idea to start out with some kind of icebreaker activity. This can be as simple as going around the room and asking the students to tell you their names and having them explain why they are taking the course, or asking them to articulate interesting facts about themselves. Or you can have students briefly interview the person sitting next to them and then go around the room and have them introduce their partners. Or you can begin with a small group activity in which students introduce themselves to each other and perform some group task that is related to the topic of the course or the first set of readings. Getting started with something communicative and fun can be a good way to set a positive tone from the beginning. Starting with something thought provoking can give them an idea of what to expect in future sections. If you feel that you absolutely do not have time for an icebreaker, you could hand out a questionnaire asking students why they are taking the course and what they hope to get out of it, and ask them to return it to you at the next section meeting. This will give them a chance to tell you what they think the course will be about and what they are interested in, and you can incorporate their interests into future section activities. (A sample questionnaire is included in the Appendix.)

After you've done some warm-up activity, get down to the business of taking attendance (if you didn't already go around the room), figuring out who is missing, and who is there but not yet registered. Students have to be enrolled in a section in order to be enrolled in the course, so sorting out who is registered and who isn't is important. The add/drop process has been largely automated through the wait-list on Tritonlink. While it is still possible to add a student by signing an "add slip" from the registrar, the Communication Department no longer has the prerogative to drop students who miss the first section. Students on the wait-list may be anxious about the possibility of getting into your section. Explain to them that they can only be added as other students drop, and urge students who are enrolled but unsure about staying in the class to decide as soon as possible. Students have until the end of the second week of the quarter to add or drop courses through Tritonlink. Usually those in the first few positions on the wait-list will get into the section, but you should make no promises. You may have students on the wait-list approach you with dire stories of their life in ruins if they don't get into your section. Be firm. If you bypass the wait-list, you may end up with more students than you are required to allow in your section. This is unfair to you and to the other students.

After you take attendance and explain the add-drop situation, you can hand out the section syllabus, which is your own explanation of your expectations and requirements for your sections (samples are included in the Appendix). Even though you are giving them something in writing, go over it with them (because they likely will not read it on their own), taking care to explain the attendance policy for the course (which should be the same for all sections and have been decided on during your first TA meeting with the course instructor). Also, explain the course requirements and grading, and tell them where and when you will hold office hours.

You should decide ahead of time up to what lecture meeting they should have done the reading for; this will depend on what day of the week your section is. For example, if your section meets on Thursday, you may want to cover the readings for the whole week. If your section meets on Monday, you will most likely cover the readings from the week before. Let them know what your plan is in writing in the syllabus, and orally when you go over it with them.

After you've explained the course and section policies and requirements, and answered their questions, you might have a few minutes left to go over the first course readings or lectures. Depending on how much time you have, you may just want to take their questions on it, or you may have planned some brief activity around one of the key concepts. If you prefer, you can do something that pertains to the theme of the course as a whole. Other TAs with experience teaching the course will have some ideas for what you could do, and by the time you walk into your first section, you will also have ideas of your own. At your first meeting, students may not have done the reading, so you might just tell them what to look for when they do it, and make sure they understand what has been covered in lecture so far by asking them questions about it.

3.3 Ideas for Organizing Discussions

Discussion sections provide a wonderful opportunity to experiment with different pedagogical approaches with fairly little at stake. Almost anything you do will provide the students with a (usually) welcome break from lecture. It is a good idea to try a variety of approaches, rather than doing the same thing every week. Some topics are easier to approach in some ways than in others, and it also prevents boredom – both yours and theirs. Possibilities include section-wide discussions in which you pose questions to the entire group; student presentations on the readings or on research projects; small-group discussions or activities, after which the groups report their results to the entire section; and mini-lectures to clarify points from lecture or the reading to fill them in on something you think is important for them to understand the concepts for that week. Dividing your sections up into smaller groups gives more people a chance to talk, and can be a way to liven things up. With only 50 minutes, you have to be careful about keeping track of time, so that you have time for whole-group “damage control” at the end, but it is a good idea to try multiple formats, even within the limited time you have.

Successful discussions tend to be those that allow students to apply course concepts to their own examples, or relate them to aspects of their lives and their experiences. This can be done without having the discussion turn into a reality TV confessional where people talk only about their personal experience, which is a definite tendency among undergraduates. You can ask students to bring in something from outside the classroom to talk about – a newspaper article, magazine cover, description of a TV commercial, anything illustrating a concept or theory from the course. You can also bring in your own examples and ask students what they think the connection is to the class topic. Short news stories are good for this, as are video clips. Often, providing concrete examples can be a good way to help students to understand more abstract concepts from the readings or lectures.

Your goal in leading the discussions is to try to get the students to take as much responsibility

as possible for their own learning. This is easier said than done, but there are a number of different strategies you can use:

Tell them to come in the next week with at least three questions about the readings, and then set them up in groups to answer them. Have the groups pick the three best questions and answers to quiz the other groups.

Brainstorm lists on the blackboard, along the lines of, “What are all the possible consequences of X?” Then have them explain the connections between what they said and X.

Bring in your own questions about the readings, and give different questions to different groups. Then have the groups explain their answers to the rest of the class.

Divide the class in two or three groups and have an open debate on different sides of an issue. (This works better if you prepare them for it the week before.) This can help them to understand that there is often no single “right” answer to issues that come up in Communication classes.

Assign different students to be particularly responsible for readings that are due for the following weeks and have them explain “their” reading to the rest of the class. This works well toward the end of the quarter when students are feeling overloaded and are not going to do all of the reading anyway.

And so on. Talk to your fellow TAs about what you are doing, what works, and what doesn't. You can use the weekly TA meetings as a forum for exchanging ideas. The Teaching + Learning Commons also has some very useful handouts on alternate participation formats for discussions.

One of the biggest challenges in leading discussions is what to do about students who talk too much and those who don't talk at all. Patterns of participation can be established early in the quarter in which a handful of people do most of the talking, and everyone else will let them. Breaking up these patterns is important, but tricky. Sometimes calling on people by name can shake up participation and engage the more reticent. But avoid putting people on the spot: quickly move on if someone can't answer the question. Sometimes quiet students will speak more openly in small groups than in the large group; ask them to be the group reporter and relay to the rest of the class the results of the group discussion. They might feel more comfortable this way. You will be aware fairly early on who are the talkers and who are the quiet ones. If you do small group activities, put a number of quiet people together in one group, and put the talkers together in a different group. But also try to vary group membership from activity to activity, so you don't always have the same small groups talking to each other all the time.

This handbook can't cover every eventuality in discussion sections, but hopefully it will be appended as different people read it and think of other suggestions or pointers to include.

3.4 Preparing Students for Quizzes and Midterms

As a TA, you will typically have a good sense of the content that will be tested in upcoming quizzes and midterms. The professor may even let you see and give input on the questions beforehand. Your task, then, is to prepare the students for what's to come without being too direct in telling them which specific topics to study.

Remember that your students do not necessarily know how to efficiently parse and study college-level material, particularly the kinds of texts and media that we teach in the Communication Department. You can do a great service for many of them simply by walking through your own process for trying to make sense of complex texts, determining which parts are the most important, and taking effective notes on them for an upcoming test. This may seem straightforward to you, even if you are not fully satisfied with your own studying practices, but it is probably not obvious to many of your students. Even as grad students, many of us do not come into the PhD program already knowing how to orient ourselves to theoretical or cultural studies texts, and undergraduates may face even more significant challenges in that regard.

It can also be helpful to model the kinds of questions that students are likely to see on tests, without giving them actual questions from upcoming tests. Sometimes it works to ask the students to suggest possible questions, with help from you to tweak questions that are too broad or too specific to be good test questions. Then, as practice, you can ask them to work in groups to answer the practice questions.

Regularly reviewing material from past class and section meetings, however briefly, can also help the students gradually build a cumulative sense of what the course is about. You can do this at the beginning of every section meeting (“What we’ve learned so far...”) and/or at moments when it makes sense to tack stock, like before a midterm or final exam. Including review in your sections also helps remind students of all the things they have already learned in the course, which makes the studying process a bit less daunting.

4. Teaching Evaluation

TAs teaching discussion sections normally have several opportunities for their work to be evaluated. The Teaching + Learning Commons has TA consultants who will schedule an observation of a new TA's section sometime during their first quarter of teaching, provided the new TA has registered with the Teaching + Learning Commons at the TA orientation. They will also administer a brief written evaluation to the students in the section at that time. These reviews are confidential, and the evaluations collected from the students are given to the TA only, not to the department. They are intended for the new TA's benefit, not for formal evaluation. The TA consultants provide new TAs with feedback on their teaching style. Through the Teaching + Learning Commons, you can also arrange to have your section videotaped, and go over the tape later with our Senior TA or a TA consultant. In general, new TAs have found these observations to be very helpful and supportive.

More recently the Senior TA has filled this role, observing all new TAs in the department. Like the Teaching + Learning Commons evaluations, these observations are confidential. They are a good way to get feedback on what works and what doesn't in a section, and are not used as a tool for evaluating TAs.

The department also administers a student evaluation of TAs, usually near the end of the course. A copy of this evaluation form is included in the Appendix. This is in addition to the Course and Professor Evaluations (CAPE), which are mainly concerned with the course and professor and only have one question about the TA.

TAs are not currently systematically or formally evaluated by faculty, but you can always ask the course instructor or another professor to sit in on one of your sections and give you feedback. It can also be helpful to have another experienced TA to sit in on your section. Any feedback given in these cases could easily be kept confidential, or could become part of your teaching portfolio.

4.1 Interpreting Student Evaluations

Research has shown that student evaluations are systematically harsher on women, people of color, international / ESL instructors, and TAs from other less privileged populations. This is a known issue that the Communication Department takes into consideration when looking over TA evaluations. In addition, it is not unusual to have a mixture of evaluations that exhibit a fairly wide range, including very positive and very negative evaluations. A negative or mixed evaluation may mean that you were not able to meet the needs of a particular student, but the evaluator may also be offering exaggerated or unreasonable criticism.

Reviewing your evaluations can be stressful or discomfoting, but keeping a measured and critical perspective is recommended. You are likely neither as great nor as bad as your evaluations claim, and regardless, your personal and professional worth is not dependent on any given quarter of teaching or any given section's experiences. That said, TAing is part of

our training as course instructors and (in many cases) future professors. Even harsh, overblown criticism may contain seeds of truth that offer wisdom and practical lessons for how to improve your teaching practice. In this sense, more mixed or critical evaluations may ultimately be the most helpful, compared to evaluations who offer praise but little concrete detail. Evaluations, then, are opportunities to learn how our teaching efforts have been received and to consider minor or even significant changes to how we approach things in the classroom.

Teaching evaluations have also become part of the broader surveillance and institutional ranking of PhD students, faculty, and other instructors. While not the most important measurement, your performance on evaluations is of interest to future employers, at least in terms of teaching positions. Consequently, it can be important to try to improve your evaluations by the end of your time at UCSD.

5. Office Hours and Other Student Interaction

All TAs are required to hold office hours. Usually TAs have one scheduled hour per week (e.g. 2:00-3:00 p.m. on Tuesdays), and the rest by appointment. Post your office hours on your office door.

The first few weeks of each quarter are normally very quiet, but your office hours can fill up right before and right after exams. Don't feel like you have done something wrong if no one comes to your office hours for the first three or four weeks of the quarter. It gets lonely sometimes, so make sure you bring something to read. In order to manage the flow of students when they do start showing up, it can help to hold group exam reviews or group sessions to discuss assignments.

One thing you might consider for major assignments or final papers is to require students to come and see you to talk about their papers or topics. This may seem extremely time consuming, but if you limit the meetings to ten or fifteen minutes and require students to come with something in hand, it can be very productive, and you will get more papers that are actually on topic. You can do this instead of replying extensively to email queries by students, which can quickly become more time consuming than office hours.

Aside from office hours, it is up to you to decide how to interact with your students. Some TAs use email extensively. Others prefer to meet in person. You will have to decide how extensively you want to use email to assist students with assignments or exam preparation. Some undergrads want to use email instead of coming to office hours, and typing long messages in response to their questions can take up a lot of your time. Make clear to students how they are to use email to communicate with you, and how much time you need to respond to emails. (It is not unusual for students to email questions about assignments late at night/early in the morning the day the assignments are due.)

6. Assignments and Exams

The number and spacing of graded assignments and exams are the key to a TA's workload. If assignments are placed too close together, or there are too many of them, you can kiss the 20 hour a week/220 hour a quarter workload limit goodbye. Ideally, instructors will consult with TAs on the number and spacing of assignments; don't feel shy about pointing out when assignments are too close together or there are too many of them.

Instructors should also consult TAs in the creation of assignments. At the very least, professors should run the assignments by the TA before they are handed out to students so that the TA can recommend modifications. TAs often have a very good sense of how difficult or easy assignments will be to both complete and grade, and most faculty like to take this into consideration. Likewise, TAs should be consulted in formulating exam questions and should at least see a draft of the exam before it is finalized. Sometimes TAs may be asked to write questions for the exams as well. Often TAs have a more immediate sense of what students are capable of than the course instructor does, even though the course instructor may have a greater knowledge of the course subject. Therefore, often the best exams and assignments are a collaborative process.

Assignments or essay prompts are usually handed out and collected in lecture, but you should take some time to go over them in section. It can be very helpful to hand out your own grading criteria or essay-writing guidelines if you have particular expectations of your students. You should also go over these in section. If you are in a sectionless class, you can request the professor to hand out similar sheets along with the assignment. It can reduce the students' confusion as they try to complete the assignment. You can never do enough to reduce students' confusion, and reducing their confusion can help to lessen yours when you have to start grading.

6.1 Library Resources

Gayatri Singh is the Library's Reference and Information Services Coordinator as well as the librarian for the Communication Department. You are welcome to contact her for any instructional needs, including tours. Her email is gasingh@ucsd.edu and phone is 858-822-2346. Additionally, the Library provides an [online guide for Communication research](#) that you can share with your students.

Gayatri can also help you review course assignments to identify and incorporate scaffolded research and critical thinking skills into your section. She can work with you to think through an assignment from a research skills perspective, arrange library support your students (e.g., in-class session, and online course guides), and verify library resources.

Librarians can also work with instructors and TAs to build guides and tutorials tailored to specific courses as well as create instructional videos for instructors and TAs to utilize in the

classroom or online. Examples of online DIY Library videos:

<http://ucsd.libguides.com/c.php?g=127075&p=830951>

The Library also provides consultation spaces for TAs to meet with their students-

- <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/spaces/instructor-ta-consults.html>

6.2 Students with Special Needs

It is important to note that some students are registered with the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#). You should ask these students to notify you of their presence on the first day of class; they can send you an email or talk to you after class. Some students will be able to take exams under special conditions or have extra time for assignments. These conditions will be determined by OSD, which is also responsible for providing ASL interpreters, note-takers, and other assistants for students with disabilities. In order to receive these and other services, as well as extra time on exams and assignments, the students must be registered with OSD.

While the undergraduate advising staff will do everything they can to facilitate accommodation requests, they cannot personally be present to oversee all the accommodations that may be required during exams. Consequently, here are some suggestions:

- 1) As soon as you know a student has an accommodation request that takes them out of the lecture hall, let the undergraduate staff know, so that rooms may be identified for exams. Many requests come requiring additional time/quiet space.
- 2) For the larger classes with sections, TAs may be designated to proctor exams that must take place outside of the lecture hall. Ideally, their office space would be used for the exam.
- 3) For classes without TAs or with not enough TAs to handle the requests for alternate location, the undergraduate staff can help out by holding the student's belongings (including laptop and phone) in a secure place and then allowing the student to take the exam in an available room in the Comm building.

7. Grading

7.1 General

Many TAs and Readers use Excel (or Google Spreadsheets) to record and calculate their grades. You will submit final grades via the E-Grades system at the end of the quarter. A variety of templates are floating around among TAs; ask your Senior TA for one, and you can modify it to suit your own needs.

Grading is the most time-consuming part of a TA or Reader's work. It is usually your decision how extensively to comment on student work; some TAs write extensive comments while others write the bare minimum. Obviously, the more comments you write, the more time it will take you to grade. On the other hand, the more you write, the more you can help the student to not only figure out why they got a particular grade, but what they can do to improve their work. Thus, you can cut down on time spent in office hours by commenting on student work. It helps to think of what you yourself would find useful if it were your own work being evaluated. In general, it's a good idea to at least let the student know what they did well, what problems they had, and how to improve for next time. The Teaching + Learning Commons has some handouts on how to comment effectively on written work.

Particularly for the final paper or exam, which you won't be able to return to students during class or section, it is a good idea to ask students to sign "Buckley Waivers." There are usually forms available in the main department office or on the table in the mailroom. When students sign the waivers and attach them to their papers, or sign the appropriate space on the back of their blue books, you can leave the papers or exam booklets out in the hallway next to the main office for them to pick up. If students have not signed Buckley waivers, you will have to hang on to the papers or exams until the students come to pick them up from you. As students have up to one year to contest grades, you will need to keep the papers for one year.

Don't be surprised if students don't want their work returned to them; many care more about the grade itself than the results of their work. In fact, it can help cut down on work for you if you ask them ahead of time to let you know if they will not be collecting their papers at the end of the quarter. You can write fewer comments on papers you know won't be retrieved. (It's still a good idea to write some comments, though, if only so you can remember why you assigned a particular grade if they question their grade later on.)

7.2 Sectionless classes (for TAs and Readers)

If your class is sectionless, current department guidelines state that you will grade 80 percent of the papers/exams, with the course instructor grading the remaining 20 percent. Readers should grade 66 percent of all papers/exams. There are obvious pedagogical reasons for this policy; grading student papers is the best way for the course instructor to determine what the students are learning in the class. It is also intended to help sectionless TAs and Readers manage their workloads. Ideally, you can also show papers you are having trouble grading to the course

instructor, and if he or she has graded some of the papers as well, he or she will be better able to advise you.

The course instructor may give you a clear rubric of what constitutes an A, B, C, etc., before you start grading. Another possibility is for you and the course instructor to read some papers in common and discuss what grades you would give them and why. From this discussion you both can devise a grading guideline based on established criteria and shared expectations. This is important because the students will be able to tell whose paper was graded by whom, and they will compare grades. You both will also have to take into account the late paper policy (which was hopefully decided before the class started and is included in the course syllabus).

There is a wide variety of grading preferences (standards, curves, etc.) in the department. How you grade the papers will most likely depend on the course instructor's preferences. One important thing to keep in mind is that you will have to be able to justify the grade to yourself and possibly to the student and the course instructor, in case you are asked to clarify a grade or respond to a grade challenge (see below). It is a good idea to take notes on your own grading criteria as you go. If you hand the students an explanation of the grading criteria you used when you give them back their papers, it helps them to understand why they got the grades they did and what they would have needed to have done to get a better grade. It also provides something for you to refer to if the students ask you to clarify their grades. Such an explanation of grading criteria could contain what a good answer or assignment included, as well as a list of common problems, and it can be as detailed as you want to make it.

Students may email you after the course but before final grades are available to ask you what their grades were. It is your choice whether to reply to them or not; bear in mind that it can be time consuming and you are no longer being paid. In general, you should probably guard against relaying very much specific grade information over email. It isn't a completely secure medium and there are university mandated privacy issues to consider. Their final grades will be available online through Tritonlink, and they can pick up their final papers or exams from the bins outside the main office of the Communication Department if they signed Buckley waivers, or get them from the main office by showing identification if they didn't.

7.3 Sections

You are responsible for grading all assignments and exams turned in by students in your sections. In classes with several sections, the added challenge is making sure grading is fair across all the sections. Sometimes, all the TAs and the course instructor will read some papers in common and discuss what grades they would give them and why. Some instructors have clear ideas of what they are looking for and will give you an extensive rubric. If the course instructor does not tell you what the grading criteria are, you should discuss them with your fellow TAs before you begin grading, so that you are all using approximately the same criteria. Some instructors will try to make sure each section has roughly the same average grade or curve.

Others consider the entire class to be the “unit” and won’t compare averages or curves between sections. Students do compare notes on grades and will soon discover if one TA grades higher or lower than the others, so it’s better if the TAs use roughly the same criteria.

It can be a good idea to hand out a general grading guideline when you explain the assignment to your sections. (An example is included in the appendix.) This can give students an idea of what is expected of them, particularly those who are trying to get As. Students at UCSD are very grade oriented, and the more information you give them ahead of time, the better. You will find that it helps to explain assignments or paper topics in great detail, several times if possible. If you have specific guidelines that you want them to follow in writing a paper (citation formats, for example), it is a good idea to hand them out in writing ahead of time. It is a good idea to share such handouts with your fellow TAs, so that everyone has the opportunity to use the same set of guidelines. Students will compare with each other what their TAs have told them about assignments, and if you are giving different information from your fellow TAs, you will hear about it.

One advantage of having several TAs teaching several sections is that you have more people to share problematic papers with. These could be papers where it is unclear that the student followed the assignment, or papers that seem to have been written for a different class, or possible cases of plagiarism. It is standard practice to ask a fellow TA for advice on how to handle a problematic paper; often your fellow TAs are better at helping you out than the course instructor might be, as they have read as many papers as you have and are familiar with the possibilities. TAs will usually meet with the course instructor once they have graded most or all of the papers to have one more discussion about grading criteria and to compare how sections are doing; this is a good time to exchange problematic papers with each other, and to talk about them with the instructor.

It is a good idea to take notes on your grading criteria as you go. You can make a handout for students in your section, or collaborate with other TAs to make one single handout for all sections that explains both the grading criteria and outlines some common problems in student papers. (An example of a handout is included in the Appendix.) This helps the students to see where they could have had difficulties and what else they could have done in their papers. It serves a very practical purpose as well, in that it cuts down on grade clarifications or challenges, which can be very time-consuming.

Students may email you after the course but before final grades are available to ask you what their grades were. It is your choice whether to reply to them or not; bear in mind that it can be time consuming and you are no longer being paid. In general, you should probably guard against relaying very much specific grade information over email. It isn’t a completely secure medium and there are university mandated privacy issues to consider.

7.4 Grade Clarifications or “Challenges”

Many students at UCSD are very concerned about their grades, and many of them have high expectations. For these reasons, requests for grade clarification or grade “challenges” are a common occurrence. There should be a clear policy for handling these challenges that is understood by all parties (course instructor, TAs, undergraduates). Ideally this policy should be stated in writing either on the course syllabus or on the assignment or exam sheet. It is important to recognize that TAs who are working under time pressure can make mistakes with grades, but that they don’t often do so, and that grades can go down as well as up if the paper is re-evaluated. If this is stated as part of the policy, it tends to cut down on the number of re-grading requests a professor or TA will receive.

It is a good idea to ask students to make grade clarification requests or grade challenges in writing. If they have to write out why they think they should have received a different grade, it is easier for the TA or the course instructor to reply. It also requires the student to think specifically about why they think their grade is wrong, which allows for a more focused discussion with the TA or the instructor.

There is no standard procedure for handling grade challenges in the department, but there are a few standard possibilities:

1. All grade challenges are handled by the course instructor, so all students are automatically referred to the instructor, who may or may not consult with the TA who graded their paper.
2. All grade challenges go through the TA first, and if the TA cannot resolve it, the student is referred to the course instructor.
3. All grade challenges go through the TA first. If the TA cannot resolve it, the TA passes the student paper to another TA, and they discuss the grade together. If they are unable to resolve it, the paper is then passed to the course instructor, who makes the final decision.

Regardless of which procedure is followed, it must be decided and explained to all students and TAs in advance, and it should be adhered to throughout the quarter.

Changing a grade during the course is quite easy, but students have up to a year to contest their final grades. This is why TAs or professors are required to hang onto student papers for one year after the course has ended. Final grades can be changed after they have been turned in only through the instructor.

7.5 Handling Plagiarism

The Communication Department occasionally makes use of online plagiarism detection services like Turnitin.com. As many students plagiarize off the Internet, Google and other search engines can be very useful in determining whether students plagiarized. If you do find that a student has plagiarized, bring it to the attention of the course instructor. There is no standard way to handle plagiarism within the department. Some instructors are more tolerant of it than others, and much depends on the circumstances and nature of the particular instance of plagiarism. Responses range from giving a reduced grade on the assignment to reporting the student to the Dean of Student Affairs of the student's college. The Academic Integrity office will deal with any cases of suspected plagiarism if you wish to report it.

8. Administrative Details

Add/Drop/Wait-list

Adding and dropping classes during the first two weeks of the quarter has been largely automated through Tritonlink. If a section is full (the current enrollment limit for an individual section is usually 26; 20 for COMM 101), students who wish to enroll in that section will be placed on a wait-list, and they will only be added as other students drop. The Communication Department no longer has the prerogative to drop students who miss the first section. It is still possible to add a student by signing an "add slip." The student must pick up the slip from the registrar, have the TA sign it (make sure all the information is correct), have it approved and stamped at the main Communication Department office, and return the slip to the registrar.

A/V Equipment

All rooms on campus are now equipped with all-in-one VCR/DVD players and laptop hook-ups with projectors. These units are usually unlocked, but if you are planning on using one during section it is a good idea to arrive a little early and make sure it is open, functional, and that you know how to use it. For other A/V needs, the Media Center requires 48 hours notice; they can respond with less notice but will charge the department. The department's undergraduate office handles classroom assignments; if you need specific equipment in your classroom, please coordinate with their office. You can also put videos on reserve at the Film and Video Library located in the Geisel Library, and put a hold on videos you want to use on a particular date.

Buckley Waivers

These are short forms that students have to sign and attach to their assignments if they want you to leave their papers out for them to pick up. The usual place to leave papers out is in the boxes in the hallway alongside the main department office. It's a good idea to get your students to sign Buckley waivers (but they are not required to do so), because if they don't you

have to hang on to their papers for a year. Blue books (for in-class exams) have a space on the back that they can sign.

Desk Copies and Readers

TAs are eligible to receive copies of all books and readings for the course for free. The procedure for obtaining the textbooks differs between the UCSD bookstore and Groundworks. Consult the department's Undergraduate Office for the current procedure to get your books. You should also get a free copy of the reader, which will usually either be delivered to the main Communication office or else given to you by the course instructor.

Instructional Technology

[Academic Computing Services](#) provides a number of instructional technology options, including web-based services such as course webboards and websites. The department IT Support Analyst can help in setting up a course website linked to the department's course webpage. Most Communication classes use the course website TritonEd (formerly TED). ACS offers an Instructional Technology mini-course every year that you can take free of charge. It's a good way to learn the basics of TritonEd.

Photocopying

TAs do not have to pay for course-related photocopying. Current departmental policy requires that TAs get their course instructor's ID card for use of the department's copier. (The copier will require an index code before you can start making copies; this is COMCRSE.)

Section Syllabus

In addition to the main course syllabus, if you are teaching sections you will have your own section syllabus. This will normally just lay out the policies and guidelines for your section, including expectations for student participation, attendance, and written work (including a plagiarism reminder). It should explain your general section objectives (e.g. the purpose is discussion, not further lecture), as well as course grading criteria (which are usually set by the professor). It also contains your name, contact information (email, office number, etc.) and your office hours. Sample section syllabi are included in the Appendix.

9. Additional Resources on Campus

Aside from other TAs, the Senior TA, the course instructor, the department's Graduate Coordinator, and the Undergrad Office, other sources you can tap for information or assistance include:

Academic Computing Services, 1313 Applied Physics and Mathematics Building,
Technical Assistance: 858-534-2267 (ACMS) <http://acms.ucsd.edu/>

Academic Integrity Office, 301 University Center, 858-822-2163,
<http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>

Counseling and Psychological Services, 858-534-3755, <http://psychservices.ucsd.edu/>

Cross-Cultural Center, Price Center East, 2nd Floor, 858-534-9689, <https://ccc.ucsd.edu/>

Gayatri Singh, Reference & Information Services Coordinator and Librarian for
Communication, 858-822-2346

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center, 858-822-3943, <https://lgbt.ucsd.edu/>

Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination, 858-534-
8298, <http://ophd.ucsd.edu/>

Office for Students with Disabilities, 858-534-4382 (voice/TDD),
<https://disabilities.ucsd.edu/about/index.html>

Teaching + Learning Commons, Geisel, Lower Level, 858-822-1992, <http://commons.ucsd.edu/>
UAW Local 2865, 510-549-3863, <http://www.uaw2865.org/>

APPENDIX

- 1. FOURTEEN TIPS FOR SURVIVING AND SUCCEEDING AS A TA**
- 2. WEEKLY HOURS GRID**
- 3. DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES**
- 4. FIRST DAY QUESTIONNAIRE**
- 5. SAMPLE SECTION SYLLABI**
- 6. TA EVALUATION FORM**
- 7. SAMPLE ESSAY GRADING GUIDELINES**

FOURTEEN TIPS FOR SURVIVING (and succeeding) AS A TA...

... in no particular order

1. Keep it in perspective. It isn't up to you to fill every hole the professor leaves. You are NOT the primary teacher, even if sometimes it feels like you are. Don't find yourself caring more than anyone else does. Come in third – behind the professor and the students!
2. Remember, you're not your students' buddy. You're not there for them to think you're cool. Sure, it is fun when this happens, but sometimes it even detracts from your ability to lead the section. At the same time, don't be such a hound for respect that you're no fun at all.
3. Be willing NOT to know. Don't posture for your students. Authenticity and acknowledging that you're all learning together are actually useful teaching tactics.
4. Don't sweat the small stuff – what to wear, whether you “seem” smart or like you have your act together (you are and you do) and etc. You've earned the right to be in front of that classroom. Enjoy it!
5. Grade in small batches. If you've got 60 students and seven days to finish grading, try hard to do just 8 or 9 papers a day, each day, for the whole week. That's an hour in the morning and an hour or so in the evening. You will maintain your sanity and be MUCH MORE FAIR to your students.
6. Remember that these classes and this degree mean a lot to your students, and it does matter. It's easy for us to forget how hard it was for us, or how we freaked out, or how we probably drove some of our professors or TAs nuts. Check your sense of self-importance at the door. Undergraduates want to be treated with the same respect and interest as we do when we knock on faculty doors.
7. Refuse to engage in grade grubbing. Get students to talk to you about the material.
 - a. At the same time, remind your students that all you can do is grade the work in front of you. You aren't grading them. An A paper doesn't make anyone an A person. Neither does an F paper make anyone an F person.
 - b. Also, don't overestimate your ability to determine the students' destinies. They have to be in control of their own education. You are a resource. But you don't owe them anything, and their success or failure in their class can't make or ruin their lives. Be very clear about this.

8. Remember that you are there to advocate to the class professor on behalf of the students. This is important. However, don't let it ever become you and the students versus the professor. Just as you want the professor to be on your side, so he or she expects the same of you.
9. Keep your sense of humor. A little self-deprecation goes a long way.
10. Be available, but not too much so.
11. Check yourself if you start to get cynical or feel too much like the teaching is taking you away from what you really want to do. Part of this career is teaching. If you really loathe it, you should probably think about that.
12. Try as hard as you can to learn your students' names. It will help you run a smoother section and get more students to talk. If they think you know them, it makes it harder to hide.
 - a. You can get a printout of your class roster (including pictures of the students in your class) from your instructor. Use them to match names to faces in your class.
13. Know something about the world the students live in and what their life is like. Engage in a bit of pop culture. It makes for great class analogies, and it will make you seem more real (and less self-involved) to them.
14. Learn to accept – appreciate, even – the power of silence. Don't fill in every blank (literal or otherwise) that the students leave.

Name _____ Dept/Unit _____ Apptmt. _____% Date _____

WEEKLY HOURS GRID

| Week | Lecture | Meetings | Required Training | Section | Consult/ Office Hrs. | Prep. Time | Grading | Other (Specify) | Total | Hrs. Worked in Excess of 20 hrs. |
|------------------|---------|----------|-------------------|---------|----------------------|------------|---------|-----------------|-------|----------------------------------|
| Orientation Week | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | |

APPENDIX "C"
REQUIRED FORM: DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

Term: _____ Supervisor: _____ ASE: _____

Course #: _____ Course Title: _____

Location: _____ Day/Time: _____

The job duties designated below are required of the Academic Student Employee,
(Please check the appropriate items and describe, as applicable):

- _____ Attend lectures
- _____ Present lectures
- _____ Instruction of _____ sections/labs per week
- _____ Preparation
- _____ Hold _____ office hours per week
- _____ Supervisor/ASE(s) meeting _____ hours per week
- _____ Read and evaluate _____ papers per student
- _____ Proctor examinations
- _____ Prepare drafts of narrative evaluations and make grade recommendation as appropriate for students in TA section/lab (Santa Cruz only)
- _____ Perform individual and/or group tutoring
- _____ Class/faculty visits
- _____ Maintain/submit student records (e.g., grades)
- _____ Perform other tasks as assigned. Please list: _____

Please provide departmental policy on class, section and/or lab size where it exists.

A Teaching Assistant with a 50% appointment shall not be assigned a workload of more than 220 hours per quarter (340 hours per semester) or a workload of over 40 hours in any one week. The number of hours worked in excess of 20 hours per week may not total more than 50 hours per quarter or 77 hours per semester. This standard shall apply proportionately to other percent appointments.

In addition, a Teaching Assistant with an appointment of 50% or less shall not be assigned a workload of more than 40 hours in any one week or more than 8 hours in any one day.

This check sheet is designed to be distributed to all ASEs except those who are designated as the Instructor of Record for the course.

cc: EMPLOYMENT FILE

COMM 10: Section A11 Guidelines

Thurs 8:00-8:50am, Center 205

XXXXXXXXX, XXXX@ucsd.edu

Unavailable by email on weekends and evenings

Office Hours: Wed 2-3pm & by appointment (Sequoyah 215)

BASICS

1. Purpose of this section is to help you get the most out of this class. If there are things that aren't clear from the readings or from lecture, here's where we figure them out or delve more deeply into them. It's my job to make sure that nobody gets lost.
2. Generally, ask me first before asking the professor. But if you have an issue with me or something that I've done and don't feel comfortable talking to me about it, feel free to contact the professor. (Other resources: OSD, OPHD, etc.).
3. All course communication will go through your UCSD email address. There are instructions online on how to set it up to forward to another address.
4. Many things related to this course will be posted on TED (ted.ucsd.edu). If you have issues, ask a friend first (self-sufficiency!) and then ask me.
5. Attendance is critical to your grade. You can miss 1 class without penalty. If you miss more, you max grade drops per each class missed. The syllabus has a list of valid excuses.
6. If you miss class or section and need to be filled in, your first resource is other students in the class, particularly those on your team (more on that later). After that, stop by my office hours if you still have questions.

SYLLABUS

<http://pages.ucsd.edu/~bgoldfarb/comm10f15/>

1. Pay particular attention to the attendance policy.
2. Academic integrity is important. Make sure all the work that you submit is your own and properly cited. Give yourself plenty of time on assignments, so you're not tempted to use shortcuts. Doing less well on an assignment is still significantly better than being referred for cheating to the Academic Integrity Office. College is supposed to be challenging, and you'll likely be held to a higher standard here than you might have been in high school. (Note: I used to do plagiarism checking professionally.)
3. Assessment:

- └ Section participation—25%
 - └ Are you here, prepared, and engaging with others & material?
- └ Weekly reading responses in TED discussions—25%
 - └ New question on readings posted after each section meeting
 - └ 250 words of your own thoughts (no summary, no quotes)
 - └ Due before 3pm lecture Wed (I will read & pick Thurs topics)
 - └ Submit on TED: **Groups > Discussion** (not under Discussion)
- └ Three-Part Communication Analysis Term project—50%
 - └ Professor Goldfarb will explain.

TEAMS

1. Your team is a group of 3-4 randomly chosen students that you will meet with regularly when we break into small groups for discussions or activities/challenges.
2. We may rotate into new groups part way through the quarter.
3. Team guidelines for (A) Listening, (B) Talking, and (C) Controversy.

GENERAL SECTION FORMAT

(I reserve the right to switch it up on occasion)

1. Take attendance.
2. Answer questions from lecture, about assignments, about the course.
3. Raise major topics or issues brought up in your responses to the readings.
4. Break up into teams for small group discussions or an activity/challenge.
5. Report on small group work to everyone.
6. Any follow-up questions that came up in discussions/reporting.

FIRST RESPONSE QUESTION (mention at least 2 readings)

What surprised you or stood out to you from the initial readings? Why do you think you had that reaction? What do you think now, after reading these pieces?

COM 100A: Situated Practice
Fall 2014 Professor Olga Vasquez

TA: XXXXXXXX
XXXX@ucsd.edu (please see the “Office Hours and Email” section)
Sections: **A06 814469 Wednesdays 8:00 – 8:50 am WLH 2110**
 A07 814470 Wednesdays 9:00 – 9:50 am WLH 2110
Office Hours: **Thursdays 11:00 am – 12:00 pm and by appointment** (see below)
Office Location: **Social Sciences Research Building 305**

Grading

Grades are participation (**35%**), two short papers (**10%**), a midterm (**20%**), and the final (**25%**). Please refer to the course syllabus for detailed descriptions for the graded requirements. **Section attendance is mandatory.** Two absences will dramatically affect your grade. Please submit a media selection and a question broad enough to stimulate conversation via email to YourTAXXXX@gmail.com by 5pm on Tuesdays before our section meets (I will explain this mini assignment as well as my emailing policy below).

Guidelines for Participation in Discussion Section

Objective of Our Section

The purpose of our discussion section is for us to work together collaboratively to explore and apply the key concepts from the readings and lectures. Our time together will be driven by your interests, questions, and your small pre-class assignments (these will be minor and hopefully fun, see the “Participation and Attendance” section below). As we work together to understand the weekly material, I will encourage you to relate it to real world situations and your own lives. Although I will be there as a guide, you will do most of the talking in order to more deeply understand the key concepts of the class, as well as take ownership of them. Our weekly meetings are *not* a repeat of the lectures. Because of this, you will be responsible for doing the weekly reading and being ready to discuss it with your classmates.

Participation and Attendance

In order for us to have a productive section, you will need to **read the materials before class** and come being prepared to discuss what you have read. Listening and responding to your classmates’ opinions in a thoughtful and respectful way is just as important as expressing your own. Our goal is to create a safe space where we can freely explore the concepts from the readings and lectures. Although we meet early in the morning, I do expect all of us to arrive on time. (I would also like to point out that there is a coffee cart conveniently located near our classroom – see you there.)

By 5pm on Tuesdays before our section meets, please **email me** an image, YouTube video, song, poem, news article, *or* life experience (you need only pick one) that you believe relates to, captures, or challenges a key concept from the reading or lecture **as well as** a question broad enough to promote discussion. This will count towards your participation grade (10 points out of the 20 total points that are allotted to section come from you turning in this assignment). Also, be prepared to explain to your classmates the connection you see between your media selection and

the material we are covering. Some weeks I may ask you to bring them in to discuss in small groups. *Keeping a journal will help with this and will make your two papers much less work.*

Office Hours and Email

Please visit me during office hours with questions or feedback as the course proceeds. As a fellow shy person, I can understand if you are not comfortable speaking in front of the class, so I will be happy to discuss the material and concepts with you one on one or in small groups. Because you are busy people, I fully expect that some of you will not be able to make my scheduled office hours; therefore, I will happily meet with you by appointment. In order to make an appointment I have three requirements: **1) email me to schedule an appointment at least two days before** when you would like to meet; **2) give me at least two blocks of time that work for you;** **3) briefly tell me the topic of our meeting.**

Please email me at YourTAXXXX@gmail.com so I do not accidentally miss your email among all the others I receive at my UCSD.edu account. I do not want to risk missing your emails. **I check my email between 9 -5** and will get back to you within 24 hours of you contacting me. **Email is for turning in your media selection and questions, and for scheduling appointments only.** Any questions regarding grades or course material should be raised during office hours, scheduled appointments, or discussion sections.

Students with Different Needs

If you require accommodations for any disability, please contact me soon so we can accommodate your exam and/or assignment needs. Students with disabilities must register with the OSD: <http://osd.ucsd.edu>.

Academic Integrity

All work must be your own and original. For more information on what constitutes cheating and plagiarism, please see <http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/defining.html>. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Principles of Community

This Course affirms UCSD's Principles of Community, and expects all students to understand and uphold these principles both in their daily interactions and in their spoken, written, and creative work. Please review the UCSD Principles of Community: <http://www.ucsd.edu/explore/about/principles.html> .

COMM 100B: Interpretive Strategies
Winter 2015, Professor Zilberg

TA: XXXXXXXX
XXXX@ucsd.edu (please put "comm100b" and your section in the subject line)
Sections: A04 Monday 1:00 – 1:50 Center 220
A05 Monday 2:00 – 2:50 Center 220
Office hours: Tues 2:00–3:00 (and by appointment) MCC 122B

Grading

Grades are participation (25%) and three papers (25% each). Refer to the course syllabus for detailed descriptions of the graded requirements. SECTION ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY. One absence will affect your grade. Please come to each section with one or two (or more) written questions or discussion topics about the readings, which are broad enough to stimulate a conversation.

Guidelines for Participation in Discussion Section

Objective of the Section

The purpose of the discussion section is to give you an opportunity to discuss course readings and lectures, ask questions and relate newly acquired information to what you observe in real world situations. I expect that you will do most of the talking. Sounding out your ideas is always an effective way of deepening your understanding of the concepts we will encounter. Section discussion WILL NOT repeat the lecture. Instead, you are expected to come prepared each week ready to explore your understandings of the week's readings, and to exchange these views with your classmates.

Participation and Attendance

Come to a section having READ THE MATERIALS and be prepared to discuss what you have read. As important as expressing your own opinions is listening to your classmates' comments and questions and responding to them in a thoughtful and professional manner. Please ARRIVE ON TIME.

Here is a brief guideline on what you should pay attention to in your reading of course materials

- What are the **key questions** that the article attempts to answer or address?
- What are the **keywords** and main issues (or topics) related to the questions?
- How does the author go about answering these questions? What methods and theories are employed?
- What examples (or evidence) does the author use?
- What answers/conclusions does the author reach? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- How can you apply the author's argument to related issues?

Office hours and Email

I strongly encourage you to visit during office hours with questions or feedback as the course proceeds. I will do my best to reply to your emails within 24 hours during the week. I will reply to weekend emails on Monday. Please don't send me desperate last-minute cries for help as I may not open the email until long after your crisis has passed. Questions about the course material should be raised in discussion sections. I will not discuss grades over email.

Students with different needs

If you require accommodations for any disability, please contact me soon so we can accommodate your exam and/or assignment needs. Students with disabilities must register with the OSD: <http://osd.ucsd.edu/>

Academic Integrity

All work must be your own and original. For more information on what constitutes cheating and plagiarism, please see <http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/defining.html>. If you have any questions or need clarification, ASK ME!

Principles of Community

This course affirms UCSD's Principles of Community, and expects all students to understand and uphold these principles both in their daily interactions and in their spoken, written, and creative work. Please review the UCSD Principles of Community: <http://www.ucsd.edu/explore/about/principles.html>

COMM 100C: Social Formations
Spring 2016, Professor John McMurria

TA: XXXXXXXX

Sections: A9 Wednesday 2:00 – 2:50pm, Mandeville B-104
A10 Wednesday 3:00 – 3:50pm, Mandeville B-104

Office hours: Tuesday 2:00 – 3:00pm or by appointment, MCC 122B (Media Center Comm Building)

Email: XXXX@ucsd.edu; I will respond to your email within 48 hours.

Note that I cannot discuss grades via email. Please come to my office hours.

Section Overview

Section provides an opportunity for you to discuss and explore the ideas covered in the readings and lectures and work through any questions you may have in a collaborative setting. This is your time to make sure that you are comfortable with the class material. Section will not be a repeat of lecture, nor can we cover everything from the lectures and readings in the limited amount of time we have. You are still responsible for any material that we do not address each week, but I will work to maximize our time together so that you get the most out of section discussions. You are welcome to come to my office hours to chat about the material or any problems you are having. If there are changes to sections, cancellations, or additional assignments/material for sections, I will notify you via email.

Students' Responsibilities

Section is a group effort as well as an individual one. Therefore, you are expected to: 1) come to class each week prepared to explore your questions and insights about the course material, concepts, and lectures, and 2) commit to exchanging your opinions with the members of our section, and 3) bring the course readings to section (electronic or hard copy) so that we can review specific passages together. Some of the in-class activities we will do will require that you have access to the week's readings.

During lectures or while reading texts for class, make note when you feel something is unclear or requires further discussion so that we can address it in section. There is a good chance others are struggling with the same idea.

Section Grading

Section is worth 20% of your final grade in the course. Attendance is mandatory; you cannot participate if you do not attend section. More than *one* unexcused section absence will lower your grade for section by one full grade per absence. Excused absences must include official documentation such as a note from a doctor. Your grade will be determined by how much effort you put into participating in section throughout the quarter. Participation includes asking/responding to questions and contributing ideas/opinions to our overall group discussions as well as fully engaging with in-class activities and small group work. If you have particular concerns about speaking up in class, please come see me in office hours as early as you can so we can figure out how to help you with this component of the class. If you miss a section meeting, it is your responsibility to contact your classmates to obtain notes and information on what you missed.

Disability Accommodations

If you require accommodations for a physical or learning disability, please contact me early in the quarter so we can arrange ahead of time to accommodate your exam and/or assignment needs. You can also contact the Office of Students and Disabilities (OSD) directly and ask them to inform me of your needs if you wish to remain anonymous. Students with disabilities need to be registered with the OSD: <http://osd.ucsd.edu/>

UCSD Communication Department
QUARTERLY STUDENT EVALUATION OF TA PERFORMANCE

NAME OF TEACHING ASSISTANT: _____

COURSE NAME & NUMBER: _____

SECTION NUMBER: _____

INSTRUCTOR: _____

QUARTER/YEAR: _____

A. HANDLING OF SECTIONS

| | Below Expectations (explain) | Improvement Needed (explain) | Satisfactory | Good | Superior |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Presents material effectively | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Leads discussion effectively | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

B. PREPARATION & PRESENTATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Comes to section well prepared | <input type="radio"/> |
| Explains material clearly | <input type="radio"/> |

C. RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Is available to students (Office Hours) | <input type="radio"/> |
| Interested in student's progress | <input type="radio"/> |

D. GRADING OF PAPERS AND PROJECTS

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Grades consistently and fairly | <input type="radio"/> |
| Gives constructive feedback | <input type="radio"/> |
| Returns papers in a timely manner | <input type="radio"/> |

****PLEASE WRITE INSIDE BOXES ONLY****

Please indicate if you take advantage of the TA's posted office hours:

Comments (course, TA, etc.):

Example of essay grading guidelines:

A: Practically professional-level essay that shows a complete grasp of course material, and an excellent take on the content and form of the question at hand. At least three references from course material are extant in the paper. No mistakes in terms of interpreting the arguments being made by authors read in class appear in the paper. Furthermore, no important points are left out, definitions are precise, and an argument is given that is then fostered and supplemented throughout the paper. The paper shows an excellent grasp of the principles of good writing, including style and grammar rules. Citations are perfectly done.

A-: A very good essay that shows a very good grasp of course material as well as a solid analysis of the content and form of the question at hand. At least three references from course material are extant in the paper. No mistakes in terms of interpreting the arguments being made by authors read in class appear in the paper. Little, if anything, is left out, and all relevant points are touched upon. A clear argument is presented. A good grasp of writing principles and grammar – very, very few stylistic mistakes, if any are present in the paper. Citations are nearly perfect.

B+: A solid essay, but with some important points missing. Still, the paper is responsive to the question at hand and engages in a meaningful way with class issues. At least three references from course material are extant in the paper. A clear thesis is proposed. There might be some problem with argument interpretation, but not to such a degree that the paper loses credibility. Very few important points are missing. Many points that are made are correct and compelling. Grammar and style mistakes are at a minimum. Citations are done very well.

B: A good essay, but with some important points missing or not completely responsive to the type of analysis called for in the assignment sheet. At least three references from course material are extant in the paper. An argument is still explicitly presented. Some blurry or inarticulate interpretations of the arguments being made by authors read in class appear in the paper, but not to such a degree as to inhibit readability, credibility, or authenticity. While some important points are left out, the points that are included are for the most part correct. Many points that are made are correct and compelling. Some style and grammar mistakes, although the essay still has very good flow. Citations are done very well.

B-: An essay that is very good in some places, but off point in others. Some important points might be missing, or the essay might not be entirely responsive to the question asked in the assignment sheet. Paper may have fewer than the required three sources; still, course material must be explicitly referenced at least twice. An argument is presented, but perhaps inarticulately so. Or, the argument does not logically flow from the introduction. Important points are left out, but not to such a degree that the argument is completely undone. Many points that are made are correct and compelling. Style and grammar mistakes are becoming more prevalent than appear in papers receiving higher marks; in fact, such style and grammar mistakes are beginning to detract from the paper's readability. Citations are done quite well.

C+: This essay is beginning to go off point, but still seeks to answer the question at hand in a meaningful or compelling way. Paper may have fewer than the required three sources; still, course material must be explicitly referenced at least twice. Important, even obvious, points are missing from the paper, or there is evidence that the question on the assignment sheet might have been misinterpreted. There is trouble with the "thesis" statement -- perhaps it isn't well stated, isn't clear, or isn't responsive to the question at hand. The paper is starting to become difficult to follow. Style and grammar mistakes are clearly present. Citations are not quite correct, but effort is clearly being made to cite properly.

C: This essay is wobbly, at best. While it tries to answer the question as laid out in the assignment sheet, it does so imprecisely or with errors in reading arguments made by authors in class. Fewer than three course reading citations are in this paper. The thesis/paper purpose might not logically flow from course material or the question at hand. The paper is becoming difficult to read, or seems written in a such a hurry that great leaps are made in reasoning and/or argument. Style and grammar mistakes appear with regularity. Citations are missing or incorrect.

C- : Argument or paper lacks depth. Important points are clearly lacking from the paper, or the question seems to have been mostly misinterpreted, or the assignment sheet somehow disregarded. Fewer than three course reading citations are in this paper. Imprecise definitions are given or there is no argument or thesis being given or built upon. This essay seems less cohesive than others scored more highly, but there is still some skeleton being followed. Style and grammar mistakes permeate the paper. Citation rules are broken.

D: Shows poor grasp of principles, has serious problems in writing or research, or is only vaguely responsive to the question being asked. Incorrect definitions given; important points are completely absent. No argument is made by this paper's writer; often, the essay consists of little

more than a litany of facts, or a total recapitulation of the class readings are presented with little to no analysis. One or fewer sources are used. Very poor writing style or attention to the rules of grammar. Citations rules are violated.

F: Essay does not meet basic standards of accuracy or academic honesty. Shows no understanding of the course material or the question being presented. No argument is made by this essay's writer. Very poor writing style or attention to the rules of grammar. Citations are completely absent.