

Teaching in Graduate School and Beyond

Erin R. Miltzer

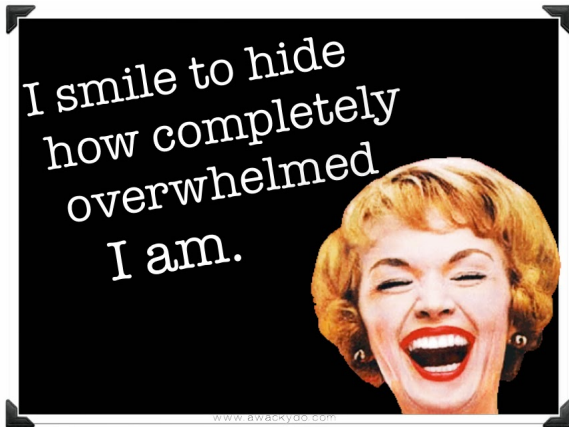
Ferris State University

6/24/2016

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- 1 Feel more comfortable with what may be expected of you this fall and beyond.
- 2 Have questions ready for your individual university.
- 3 Much like EDGE (in general) you may feel a bit overwhelmed by everything we will talk about but remember this is a broad overview!
- 4 Ready to give me and EDGE some feedback on how we could tackle the question of "Teaching in Graduate School" even better the next time! (*Maybe that information would be better after your first year is complete...=)*)

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Overview

Go here later or if you are not present at this talk, this is a great resource!
<http://www.maa.org/programs/students/student-resources/a-handbook-for-mathematics-teaching-assistants>

- 1 Part I : Variety is the Spice of Life
 - Types of Responsibilities
- 2 Part II : Hurdles
 - Your Problems
 - Student Problems
- 3 Part III : We Must Consider the Future
 - Teaching Evaluations
 - Types of Teaching

What is a TA? What is an RA?

So you received a Teaching Assistantship or a Research Assistantship for the fall. Maybe you know exactly what that means (maybe you do not). We will walk through what both of those terms mean and I welcome any additional input or questions from the audience.

Grader/Grading

- 1 Be sure it is clear who you are grading for and keep in contact with them.
- 2 Ask questions to anyone involved. Talk with the other graders.
- 3 Take them some of your grading to ensure you are completing it correctly.
- 4 Ask for a rubric OR make one yourself. (Wait, what is a rubric?) "a scoring guide used to evaluate the quality of students' constructed responses"

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Grader/Grading

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Mathematical Concepts	Explanation shows complete understanding of the mathematical concepts used to solve the problem(s).	Explanation shows substantial understanding of the mathematical concepts used to solve the problem(s).	Explanation shows some understanding of the mathematical concepts needed to solve the problem(s).	Explanation shows very limited understanding of the underlying concepts needed to solve the problem(s) OR is not written.
Mathematical Reasoning	Uses complex and refined mathematical reasoning.	Uses effective mathematical reasoning	Some evidence of mathematical reasoning.	Little evidence of mathematical reasoning.
Mathematical Errors	90-100% of the steps and solutions have no mathematical errors.	Almost all (85-89%) of the steps and solutions have no mathematical errors.	Most (75-84%) of the steps and solutions have no mathematical errors.	More than 75% of the steps and solutions have mathematical errors.
Explanation	Explanation is detailed and clear.	Explanation is clear.	Explanation is a little difficult to understand, but includes critical components.	Explanation is difficult to understand and is missing several components OR was not included.
Mathematical Terminology and Notation	Correct terminology and notation are always used, making it easy to understand what was done.	Correct terminology and notation are usually used, making it fairly easy to understand what was done.	Correct terminology and notation are used, but it is sometimes not easy to understand what was done.	There is little use, or a lot of inappropriate use, of terminology and notation.
Completion	All problems are completed.	All but one of the problems are completed.	All but two of the problems are completed.	Several of the problems are not completed.
Diagrams and Sketches	Diagrams and/or sketches are clear and greatly add to the reader's understanding of the procedure(s).	Diagrams and/or sketches are clear and easy to understand.	Diagrams and/or sketches are somewhat difficult to understand.	Diagrams and/or sketches are difficult to understand or are not used.
Checking	The work has been checked by two classmates and all appropriate corrections made.	The work has been checked by one classmate and all appropriate corrections made.	Work has been checked by one classmate but some corrections were not made.	Work was not checked by classmate OR no corrections were made based on feedback.

Rubric was made using the website Rubistar

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- 5 **Warning** : Students can attempt to change their answers after receiving their work back. Be sure to grade in such a way that would make that not possible.

Recitation Leader

What do you think a recitation leader does? Discuss with your neighbors.

Recitation Leader

- 1 Typically you are running a (somewhat) structured problem session for a class that has a lecture component.
- 2 Be sure you are CLEAR on what the primary instructor expects from you. You may need to go over specific homework questions or administer quizzes.
- 3 You may be required to have your own syllabus.
- 4 Ask 2nd or 3rd years what they did during their recitation. If they had the same primary instructor, they may know even more.
- 5 Take some risks, try new things! If you are going to a major (Math) meeting, now is the time to start attending teaching talks.
- 6 **Warning** : Especially at the beginning of your teaching career attempt all the problems you planning going over in class. USE the solutions manual! Additionally, seek out instructor resources your text book offers.

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Instructor

- 1 There may be a course coordinator. You should know who this person is, where to find them and how to get a hold of them. Also, always be at the required meetings!
- 2 There may be common exams throughout the semester but there is almost always a common final. You may or may not get to see these exams.
- 3 **Office hours** : Be sure to be clear to the students **where** and **when** they are! It is important that those who actually want help can get help.
- 4 Try to get to know your students (really in any of these situations) and know their names. You can use blackboard (ask them to post a picture on their account). You can take pictures of them and put it where they sit on a piece of paper. You can call on them and try to rotate through as much as possible.
- 5 **Warning 1!** You do NOT have to be their "friends."
- 6 **Warning 2!** Your students, especially freshman, pretty much know nothing about college.

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Tutoring and/or Office Hours

- 1 Be sure to make it clear that they need to come with questions or clarifications.
- 2 Answer questions with questions (this can be frustrating for them so just try to gauge their level).
- 3 Try to not write much yourself but have them write. *You know what you know...you do not know what they know.*
- 4 Have a book on hand and/or access to their homework ready.
- 5 Make sure there is spot that you can comfortably fit or maybe even a board to work on.
- 6 Consider having office hours in a different location (coffee shop on campus, student center, etc).
- 7 Encourage students (in general) to attend office hours and make it as easy as possible for BOTH you AND them.
- 8 **Warning!** As a graduate student, be sure to put yourself first.

****Remember : you are student first.****

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Research Assistant*

- "I met with my advisers and sometimes their post-docs at least once a week. During the first year, I tried a lot of things that didn't pan out, but I learned a lot about the system I was working with. I read a ton of papers and had to come up with my own method of keeping them organized. I taught myself a lot of new coding skills as a part of my RA as well."
- "My advice (and this applies to any kind of purely research position) is to keep a hobby/activity that makes you feel well and that you're progressing even if you get stuck in your research. In my case, I took French classes (with my supervisor's blessing). The funny thing is that 5 years after graduating I ended up with a permanent position in Montreal, so those French classes paid off big time."

Research Assistant*

- “RA for me and for my students meant doing mathematics research in a specific direction related to the research grant paying for the RA. This research can end up being part of a dissertation or just a side publication before completing the doctorate and it may or may not involve coauthors.”
- “OK think the biggest challenge for me was feeling like I didn’t know enough. Especially as a woman in a mostly guy lab. - they guys were really good at BS. But being naive, I didn’t know it was BS and they were just testing their arguments. I thought they knew everything and were brilliant. By my third year, I realized they were full of BS. You gotta stick it out long enough to realize it and work hard enough to then sound better.”

Just Women Stuff? Sexual Harassment? Sexism?

Before we start, discuss the terms "sexual harassment" and "sexism."
Specifically, what does it mean and how do you recognize it?

I will be passing out a scenario that you will look at with a partner.

Just Women Stuff? Sexual harassment? Sexism?

- "There are almost no women in your department. A couple of the faculty and other post docs regularly drop by your office to chat. There is nothing sexual going on, but they aren't dropping by to chat with your male counterparts. (You know this purely by observation). You just want to do your work in my office, and I don't need people dropping by all the time."
- "You have given two seminar talks. After the second talk, a faculty member comes up to you and says "Your talk was very nice. And the dress you wore for your second talk was much less revealing than the dress you wore for your first talk."
- "After class you are approached by a student. The student asks you if you could talk to him/her after class. As you are walking to your office the students asks what your plans are this weekend. Your face looks confusing so the continue and ask if they could take you out to dinner."

https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sexual_harassment.cfm

What do you do?

Below is a statement made by someone who had been sexually harassed by a student. Although the exact details of the harassment are not given, here is what this person shared about her experience.

- "I filed a formal complaint with my school's Title IX office. I think every school is supposed to have one. They didn't do ANYTHING because I didn't have any evidence to prove who did it, which was really disappointing because I'm pretty sure it's supposed to be their job to investigate, not mine. I also talked to our graduate student staff adviser, and she arranged for me to switch classes with another TA. I was also offered to force the entire class to go through sexual harassment training, and to have one of the older male professors talk to the class about this type of behavior, but I declined those because the first felt like a punishment for the whole class when most of them didn't do anything wrong, and the second made me feel like I needed a big man to protect me. I'm still not sure if I made the right decisions there."

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Incidents in Teaching or Related

This subject is brought up due to a very specific requested from a fellow Edger. Unfortunately, you may have to deal with unruly students and handle situations you may be surprised by. **Take a minute and discuss one or two of these with the person sitting near you. What would you do?**

- 1 A student actually YELLS at you for a grade they received.
- 2 A student mocks (heckles, disrupts, etc) you during class.
- 3 A student will not abide by your rules and breaks them regularly. (Example : Cell phone rule)
- 4 A student sends you threatening emails.
- 5 A student leaves your class after an exam and breaks a door or a window.
- 6 A student pulls out a weapon of some kind towards you or another student.

Possible Solutions

- [Student Yelling] "I used all my strength to calmly and civilly explain to the student how the exam was graded and how his answers were different from correct answers, until he finally gave up and decided to yell at the professor instead. I know that I should have kicked the student out of my office, but I was terrified and acted on instinct. Going forward, I always make sure there are people in the offices nearby when I meet with students, and my office neighbors know that they can and should intervene if they hear something like that again. (A lot of people heard what was going on, and came to check on me after the student left, but I wished someone had come when the student was still there.)"
- [Student Emails] I forward them, either to the professor of the class or the department chair, or both, depending on the level of the email. I usually don't directly respond to the student.
- [Warning] Be professional at all times. Remember, they have the ability to go to an administrator to report you! Be-careful what you say in emails. Be careful to always have someone else around when you have interactions with your students. Do not touch your students. Do not date your students.

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It is not all bad, I promise.

The next few slides may be discouraging and intimidating, but remember, as humans we have a tendency to remember the bad stuff (and focus on that) more than the good stuff. You will have more lovely, respectful students than you will have "bad" students.

The “bad” apples make it hard on everyone!

- Lack of motivation and extreme apathy.
 - ▶ It doesn't hurt to show your love/enthusiasm for your subject. Just remember that not everyone will feel the same way and you cannot convince everyone to want to do well.
- Tardiness and excessive absences.
 - ▶ Be prepared for how you may handle these types of issues. Be clear in your syllabus your policies.
- Distracting the class.

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 - ▶ You may not even know what section they are from or class. They do not address you and they do not sign their name.
 - ▶ End of the semester "I am worried about my grade." "I would like extra credit."
- Liars and lying in general.
- Cheating.

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- Over achievers and in particular, grade worriers.
 - ▶ These types of students will keep you on your toes. They will hold you accountable for everything you write (in your syllabus) and everything you say.
 - ▶ These students are not “bad” students by any means, just remember to keep your best to be organized and ready for contested grades.

Teaching Evaluations

Oh man... what a loaded topic....

- Get ahold of the questions the students will be asked at the start of the semester. You should be able to ask your graduate coordinator or department chair for these questions.
- Prepare your students for these questions in some way. You could show them the questions or at least talk about them. Sometimes bad evaluations come out of a student's misunderstanding (remember what I said about students not really understanding what college is....)
- Evaluations may be filled out using paper or may be online. It is common that you should not be in the room nor should you take the written evaluations.
- What I do : I actually give them my own questions in class or using a google form and I do require them to give their names. I ask questions like "What did you learn this semester?" or "What part of the class did you enjoy the most?" or "How has your attitude towards mathematics changed over the semester?" or "What advice would you give someone who was just beginning this course next semester?"

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Teaching Evaluations - Types of comments that you may see....

- 1 "She's pretty hot. I would date her if I wasn't an upstanding member of the student council."
- 2 "The teacher expects you to read the book as a requirement of the class."
- 3 "I had to teach myself and study after class."
- 4 "She is condescending."
- 5 "The instructor is intimidating."
- 6 "I had to go to the tutoring center 27 hours this semester."
- 7 "She is just rude."
- 8 "He plays favorites."
- 9 "Her clothes are distracting."
- 10 "She is the hottest Calc 3 TA."

Teaching Evaluations - How to handle and react

- 1 You may find yourself more sensitive than you would have predicted. Sometimes, they can hit you hard.
- 2 If you go to ratemyprofessor.com you may never want to go back....
- 3 However, your fellow graduate students and future colleagues WILL go to ratemyprofessor.com and will feel it holds value. They may even try to compete with you.
- 4 There are people who eventually stop reading their evaluations. This is not necessarily advice, just truth. You should read them, especially at the beginning.
- 5 Advice : Read them with a trusted friend.
- 6 **Warning !** You may get evaluated a certain way just based on the fact that you are male or female.
<https://news.ncsu.edu/2014/12/macnell-gender-2014/>

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Types of Teaching

- Lecture
- IBL
- Active Learning
- Flipped Classroom
- Other types ?

Curriculum Vitae

- 1 Start one TODAY and keep it going every semester. Pick a time and a date and sit down and update it. You will be surprised how much you forget.
- 2 After your first year or two, ask faculty members to look at your CV. Especially one that has been on search committees!
- 3 Give talks even at your graduate student colloquium! Go to other schools to give talks too. Try regional conference and not just big meetings (Math Fest, JMM).
- 4 Teaching awards are great, but be sure to show some leadership, somewhere.
- 5 Try to teach more than just calculus or lower level classes. Ask... it never hurts to ask.
- 6 Anything else?

I leave you with this to use in your teaching and for yourself.

How am I
comprehending?

4 - I understand it.
I could teach this to
my parents.

3 - I understand it.

2 - I think I get it, but
I'm still getting some
problems wrong.

1 - I don't get it.
I need help.

I Love My Classroom

Contact : Ferris State University - Militze@ferris.edu