NEW CA TRAINING

Stanford Computer Science Department
Fall 2014 - 2015
Katherine Breeden and David Hyde, CS Department CA Mentors

please make sure you have signed in!
AGENDA

- University policies
- Your duties as a Course Assistant
- Effective teaching
- Additional resources
- Questions & answers
CA : AN IMPORTANT JOB!

https://oae.stanford.edu/video-resource-teaching-assistants
UNIVERSITY POLICIES

- University Policies
  - The honor code
  - Students with disabilities
  - Sexual harassment
HONOR CODE

Agreed to by every student and faculty member

- [link](http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/judicialaffairs/policy/honor-code)

Computer Science Honor Code

- [link](http://csmajor.stanford.edu/HonorCode.shtml)
- [link](http://stanfordvideo.stanford.edu/stream/oja/hc-computer_science.html)
HONOR CODE

- It is your responsibility not to put students in a position to violate the Honor Code
- Reduce the temptation to cheat
  - Clearly state permitted types of aid and collaboration
  - Don’t reuse old assignments
  - Provide plenty of practice material
  - Set intermediate milestones for large projects
- Honor Code violations do happen
  - If you suspect a violation, talk to the professor
  - The Honor Code prohibits penalty grading
“In computer science courses, it is usually appropriate to ask others... for hints and debugging help or to talk generally about problem-solving strategies and program structure. In fact, students are strongly encouraged to seek such assistance when needing it.”
 Guidelines for students:

- Indicate on your submission any assistance you received
- Never share actual code with others
- Do not look at solutions/code from previous years
- Be prepared to explain any program code you submit
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- Student must initiate request for special aid with the Office of Accessible Education (not the CA)
  - [http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae](http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae)
  - Typically, students receive extra time on exams or take them in a different setting

- Things you can do to help:
  - Read what is written on the board as you write it
  - Face and speak to the class, not the board
  - Handouts in electronic format are easier to read
Office of Accessible Education
Stanford University
563 Salvatierra Walk
Stanford, California 94305-8540

650/725-5301 FAX
650/723-1066 VOICE
650/723-1067 TDD

Confidential Student Information

Date: May 12, 2010, Spring Quarter ’09 – ’10
To: Professors, Teaching Assistants & Teaching Fellows
From: Teri A. Adams, J.D., Assistant Director
teri.adams@stanford.edu, 725-2490
Re: Academic Accommodations
SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- Unwelcome sexual advances, inappropriate jokes, ... or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:
  - Implicit or explicit suggestion that submission to or rejection of conduct will factor into academic evaluation
  - Conduct interferes with individual’s academic environment

http://harass.stanford.edu
SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- In relationships between individuals in inherently unequal positions (teacher-student, coach-athlete, etc.), the person in the position of greater power bears the primary burden of accountability.
  - This person is required to notify their supervisor so that alternative evaluative arrangements can be made if needed.
  - Failure to do so is a violation of the policy

http://harass.stanford.edu
THOUGHT EXPERIMENT
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COURSE ASSISTANT DUTIES

- Course communication and administration
- Homework, exams, solution sets
- Grading and grade tracking
- Office hours, sections, reviews

A historical note:
- CA = Course Assistant, TA = Teaching Assistant
- Same commitment and compensation, but assistants who will teach new material are designated TAs
TIME COMMITMENT

- 25% CA
  - 10 hours/week, 2 hours of office hours
- 50% CA
  - 20 hours/week, 4 hours of office hours
  - May only register for 10 units of courses
- Time commitment is an average.
  - You will work more during some weeks, less during others
STARTING THE QUARTER

- Meet with the professor!
  - Establish goals, duties, and expectations
- Set up course communication means
  - Ideally by first day of the quarter
  - Course web page
  - Mailing lists and newsgroups
Prepare & deliver course info on the first day of class:

- Meeting times and location
- Teaching staff: office location/hours, contact info
- Course description, prerequisites, textbooks
- Late policy, collaboration policy, grading policy
- Schedule of exams, major projects, assignments
COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

- Many different flavors
  - Web page, class email lists, newsgroup, Piazza, in-class announcements...

- Method not as important as establishing a consistent means of communication
  - Professor may already have a preferred method

- Someone must maintain it
PIAZZA - ONLINE Q&A

http://www.piazza.com
EMAIL COMMUNICATION

- Students will email you... a lot!
- Respond in a timely manner, but:
  - Manage the load
    - Divide responsibility among course staff
    - Set expectations for turnaround time
    - Suggest use of office hours, especially if the questions are difficult to answer via email
    - Compile and make available answers to FAQs
GRADING

- Should be done in a timely manner
  - Return graded assignment before the next one is due
  - Pick a weekly time when CAs grade together
    - Or, take turns grading week to week.

- Should be consistent and fair
  - Agree on grading criteria beforehand
  - The same person grades a question across all students
  - Read through a few solutions before starting
Rubrics help enormously.
  - Increase fairness, efficiency; requires some “preprocessing” but is totally worth it.

Point distribution
  - Prefer 0, +1, +2 over 75.25, 75.5, etc.

Provide solution sets
  - List common mistakes, point distributions.
  - Some professors may be hesitant to post solutions.
How should I handle re-grading requests?

- Permissive – Point-monger paradise, CA nightmare
- Risky Game – Reserve the right to re-grade everything
- Bureaucratic Nightmare – Require a written justification for a re-grade
- Lazy Evaluation – Defer until the end of the term; regrade if the points affect the student’s final grade.

Do not re-grade with the student present!

- Listen to their explanation, then ask them to leave the graded work with you
GRADE TRACKING

- Old-skool spreadsheet (Excel, Calc, Numbers...)
- Google docs spreadsheet
  - Facilitates multi-user editing and collaboration, versioning
  - But: privacy!
- CourseWork
- ... other tools available.
THE PHD GUIDE TO T.A. OFFICE HOURS

ATTENDANCE IS EXPONENTIAL:

OFFICE HOUR ATTENDANCE

THE DAY BEFORE THE BIG EXAM

DAY GRADES ARE POSTED

ACADEMIC TERM

BEST TIMES TO HOLD OFFICE HOURS:*

- FRIDAY AFTERNOONS
- CLASS TIME
- DAY AFTER HOMEWORK IS DUE

BEWARE THE PRE'S:

LIVES WILL DEPEND ON ME.
CAN I GET AN "A" FOR "C" WORK?
MY TUITION PAYS YOU. AS YOUR CUSTOMER, I DEMAND AN "A"!
I CAN'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MATERIAL COVERED DURING CLASSES I SKIPPED.
YES, BUT WHY???

PRE-MED  PRE-BUSINESS  PRE-LAW  PRE-PHD

NEVER REVEAL TO STUDENTS...

YOUR CELL-PHONE #  YOUR HOME ADDRESS
YOUR PERSONAL LIFE  YOURSELF

BEING THE "EVIL" T.A. IS IT A BAD THING?

CON
students won't like you

PRO
students won't talk to you

ANSWER: NO.

*SO NOBODY WILL SHOW UP

*ASSUMING YOU HAVE AN OFFICE
OFFICE HOURS

- Inform students of times and locations
  - Use course web page and mailing lists
  - Ideally by second week of class

- Office hour times - when should I hold them?
  - Your convenience?
  - Students’ convenience?
  - Adjust hours according to students’ needs
  - Be on time and don’t cancel at the last minute
  - Announce any changes through course communication
Office hour locations - where should I hold them?

- Your own office is OK, provided it is accessible
- Gates B24 and B26 - two cubicles per room
  - Managed on Google calendar, Meredith will ask for your Gmail
  - Visit Gates 176 to get your Gates building key reprogrammed, or to get a key if you need one
  - Exterior doors are locked after 5:30pm and on weekends – remind students to carry their Stanford ID card
- Library or computer clusters (Gates B08, B30)
- Other? Bytes, Coupa, Skype, ...
OFFICE HOURS

- Preparation is key!
  - Attend lectures to keep up with what’s going on
  - Read the assignments and understand the solutions
  - Prepare hints or milestones for completing assignments

- Encourage attendance
  - e.g. write a note on a struggling student’s problem set

- Be reassuring and patient

- Be open to suggestions and feedback
PROF-CA RELATIONSHIP

- Meet and talk often
  - Open, honest, and respectful dialogue makes life easier
  - Discuss who is doing what and when
  - Never assume something unassigned will get done

- Seek and communicate student feedback
  - Students tend to be more candid with their CAs
  - Solicit feedback early to help improve the course
  - Communicate student feedback tactfully (i.e., professors are people too.)
EVALUATIONS

- CAs receive no official department evaluation
- Ask for feedback and suggestions
  - In office hours or through a feedback form
  - Ask fellow CAs to attend your section and give feedback
- VPTL evaluations
  - Small group evaluations
  - Online mid-quarter evaluations
  - DVD recording and one-on-one coaching
  - https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/teaching-services
COUNSELING STUDENTS

- Students may sometimes seek counsel beyond simple academic matters

- Offer support:
  - Listen
  - Express concern
  - Be empathic and understanding
COUNSELING STUDENTS

Know your limits – your responsibilities are academic in nature

- Make issues known to the professor
- Suggest tutoring and academic support
  - [http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/cgi-bin/drupal_ual/ARS_index.html](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/cgi-bin/drupal_ual/ARS_index.html)
- Suggest counseling and psychological services
- Suggest peer counseling and support
  - [http://thebridge.stanford.edu](http://thebridge.stanford.edu)
IN SHORT: BE PROFESSIONAL

amc / “breaking bad”
QUESTIONS ABOUT DUTIES?

- Course communication and administration
- Homework, exams, solution sets
- Grading and grade tracking
- Office hours, sections, reviews
- Feedback and suggestions
- SCPD Courses
- Struggling students…
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Movie time!
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  - CS Department
  - Office of the Vice Provost of Teaching & Learning (VPTL)
  - CA Mentors
- Questions & answers
CS Educational Affairs

- Meredith Hutchin (hutchin@cs)
CS DEPARTMENT

Steven Magness (magness@cs, Gates 187)

- Copy codes for course materials
- Classroom reservations
- Equipment loans
  - Projector, computer, TV, DVD, etc.
  - Provide 2 days’ notice

Claire Stager (stager@cs, Gates 182)

- CA textbook library
  - Quarterly loans
- Food and drinks for midterm/final exam grading
Computer Science CA Mentors

Teaching/organizational help, anything else!

Katherine Breeden (kbreeden@cs)  
David Hyde (dabh@cs)
Formerly the CTL - Center for Teaching & Learning

Provides resources to promote excellence in teaching and student learning

- Classroom evaluations and videotaping
- Focused training sessions
- Teaching tips and handouts
- Lunchtime lectures and workshops

http://teachingcommons.stanford.edu
Introduction to Cardinal Courses

OCTOBER 7, 2015 - 12:00PM TO 1:00PM
SHRIRAM 366

PLEASE RSVP HERE. FEEL FREE TO CONTACT SARAH TRUEBE (CONTACT INFO BELOW) WITH ANY QUESTIONS.

What is a Cardinal Course? A Cardinal Course is one that marries ways of thinking with ways of doing, allowing students to work with community partners and stakeholders on real-world issues.

VPTL Presents: Great Teaching Showcase

OCTOBER 2, 2015 - 5:00PM TO 8:00PM

http://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/events
ONLINE - SUTACS

- Repository of useful CA information (at least for the time being!)
  - New CA information (including this presentation)
  - Course Assistant information sheet
  - Mass grading tips
  - Links to policies and guidelines

http://sutacs.stanford.edu

and soon at:
http://cs.stanford.edu/education/tas/current-tas
QUESTIONS ABOUT RESOURCES?

- Computer Science Department
- VPTL (formerly CTL)
- SUTACS
WHAT MAKES A GREAT CA?
WHAT MAKES A GREAT CA?

- Preparation and organization
- Knowledge of the course material
- Communication skills
- Accessibility and availability
- Concern for students’ learning
- A good relationship with the professor
WHAT MAKES A GREAT CA?

- Passive Assistant
  - Less work
- Active Partner
  - Much more enjoyable and rewarding
  - Establish good relationships
  - Students prefer CAs that care
  - Doesn’t necessarily imply a major time sink
- Be an active partner and enjoy your time CA’ing!
LOTS MORE SUPPORT...

- Use your resources!
  - CTL (workshops & teaching feedback)
  - Mentors in Teaching - MinT - Program
  - Professors & other CAs

- Further mentoring...
  - Coffee/tea, one-on-one meetings, groups, ...
  - Ideas?
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Homework:

• Get prepared - talk to your prof & fellow CAs, course website, schedule staff meetings, ...

• Check out CS TAs website:
  
  http://sutacs.stanford.edu

• Check out the CTL website:
  
  https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/

• Have fun!