Political Science 501: Teaching Assistant Training

Prof. Eric Smith	Fall, 2020
E-mail: smith@polsci.ucsb.edu	Hours: Wed 3:30-5:00; Fri 10:30-12:00; or by appointment
Pronouns: He/him/his	Zoom link:
Michele Zamora, Lead TA	Hours: Mondays 11am-2pm
Email: michele_zamora@ucsb.edu	and by appointment
Pronouns: She/Her/Hers	Zoom Office Hours Link

Seminar Description:
Designed to prepare graduate students for future work as Political Science Department teaching assistants, this seminar will train students to lead discussion sections, *with specific emphasis on remote instruction*; outline department and university policies, and introduce best practices on classroom management, evaluation of student work, and effective instructional assistance. The seminar will describe UCSB's student service resources, and students will learn strategies for working with diverse populations, as well as with undergraduates experiencing various academic challenges. Students will participate in discussions with faculty and experienced teaching assistants; engage in role-playing and practice grading exercises and observe fall quarter discussion sections.

Student Learning Objectives:
By the end of the seminar, students should be able to effectively work with groups of undergraduate students, demonstrate a basic competency in leading discussion sections and implement classroom management skills. Graduate students should have also acquired skills in the development and use of appropriate measures to assess student work. Finally, students should have acquired a foundational understanding of effective course design for an undergraduate Political Science course, with clear goals, appropriate readings, assignments, and sequencing of sub field courses.

Course Requirements:
This course involves a handful of short exercises and seminar discussions, but has no evaluated assignments and no exams. There are a few assigned readings, but no textbooks. Attendance, however, is mandatory.

1. **Attending, and participating in, the seminar on Zoom.** This seminar will meet once a week over the ten weeks of the fall term. Sessions will be comprised of both synchronous meetings, such as Zoom sessions, and asynchronous activities. We will post material on GauchoSpace (**gauchospace.ucsb.edu**) most of those weeks which will be required reading for discussion or use in the seminar. This material will be as varied as podcasts, brief articles or other documents, and sample grading exercises. You will need to download the Zoom app and access it at **ucsb.zoom.us**.

2. **Reading Assignments.** We will post the few brief required readings, documents, or exercises

on GauchoSpace. We expect students to review the material each week in preparation for the seminar and ***prior to attending class***.

We expect that all students will come to the seminar fully prepared to discuss the assigned materials for that session. Consistent failure to come so prepared may result in the recording of an "Unsatisfactory" grade at the end of the seminar. Should this be the case, students will be required to re-take the seminar.

3. **Using the GauchoSpace Course Management Website**. We will post the syllabus, other assigned materials or exercises, and various announcements throughout the term on the GauchoSpace website. Please ensure that you have activated your campus email – or are forwarding email to an account that you check at least once a day.

4. **Using Nectir, a chatroom system.** Nectir offers a secure, private chatroom for use in classes. We will use it in PS 501 and you are likely to see it used in other classes at UCSB. There is a Nectir portal on gauchospace. You can also access it at **ucsb.nectir.io**.

5. **Homework, Quizzes, and Discussion Section Observations.** There will be a handful of brief homework exercises required for this seminar, which we will discuss in class. Please make sure to check in with GauchoSpace each week in order to read the assignment and ask us questions. Additionally, you will be required to observe two discussion sections led by advanced teaching assistants. We will list the available sections on GauchoSpace, along with contact information. We will discuss your perceptions of those observations during the final meeting of the seminar.

6. **Grades.** This seminar uses a grade scale of "S" or "U" ("satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory") to reward participation and/or performance. We expect that all students will participate in the activities and discussions held in the seminar, and thus will earn a "satisfactory" grade. Nonetheless, we retain the right to award an "unsatisfactory" grade to students with significant unexcused absences, or for those unwilling to prepare adequately or participate in the seminar.

7. **Academic Challenges**. We are mindful of the stresses graduate school can place on students. Should you find yourself experiencing *any kind of issue* that you believe is interfering with your work here at UCSB, please reach out to either of us or Kathryn Ficke – the Graduate Program Coordinator. In almost all cases, there are resources here on campus that can help you sort out the problem or problems. Some of the various student resources available are:

• Emotional support
• Technical support
• Food or housing security
• Work-life balance
• Medical care
• Roommate or landlord-tenant issues
• Academic advising

8. **Students with Disabilities.** It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and

individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact us *and* the Disabled Students Program, Student Resource Building, Room 2120, at (805) 893-2668, as early as possible in the term to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

9. **This course is a work-in-progress.** Neither of us has taught grad students how to be TAs online during a pandemic. We may change parts of the syllabus to make it work better during the term. If you have suggestions (e.g., spend more time on this, less on that, talk about this new technology or another topic you didn't cover) or more general concerns (e.g., I don't feel that I understand a problem well enough or how should I react when a students says …), please let us know and we will try to address your suggestions or concerns.

Finally, please feel free to see, call or email us, should you have any difficulties, questions, or issues with any of the assignments or course material. Learning is an interactive experience, and while it takes the effort of both of us to make the process work, sometimes it helps to have things explained again, or in a different way. Make sure that we know that you need help, and we will do our best to clear up your misunderstanding or help you to move a roadblock in your path.

Schedule:

Week Zero: Sept 28 – Oct 2

Hi! I'm Michele, the Lead TA and your fellow graduate colleague. **Please post a short video response** telling us a bit about yourself and what you're are looking forward to about TAing your aspirations and aprehensions! Link here: https://flipgrid.com/0a66f1c5.**Then join our Nectir account by registering (tutorial here:** https://www.notion.so/Nectir-Student-Guide-286686bd228f414ebfaacb70e6a679a3**), and write a response** about something that inspired you from one of your colleagues' videos introductions on our discussion board: https://ucsb.nectir.io/group/ps501_tatraining. Time to start practicing online teaching tools!

Please take a moment to read the *TA Manual*.   POLS students will receive a copy during New Student Orientation on Monday, September 28. Bren students will receive a copy in their department mailboxes.

There will be a quiz on GauchoSpace, which we will make available beginning at noon on Tuesday, September 29. The quiz is *required*, but it will not be graded. We will discuss the answers at our first meeting on Friday, October 2.

Please refer to the *TA Manual* we've distributed, or access the digital copy posted on GauchoSpace. We will discuss the correct answers during the Friday, October 2 session.

Week 1: Oct 2 – Introductions & Overview of Being a TA
   1. Introductions via Flipgrid and in person

2. Overview of a TA's role in our department and an explanation of discussion sections

3. Discussion of *TA Manual* and the *TA Manual* quiz

4. Hopes and Fears

5. Matching with a TA to shadow this Fall. You will be paired with an experienced TA, attending several sections with them the first 5 weeks of the quarter, so you can put theory to practice. Your job is to take notes on TA style and format: what works/doesn't work for you?

6. Presentation from the TA union (3:20)

Reading:

- "How to Be a Graduate Student Teaching Assistant." Brief overview of Teaching Assistant life, written by three PhD students.
- "Tips for First-Time TAs"
- [How to Be a Graduate Student Teaching Assistant" File](#)
- ["Tips for First-Time TAs" File](#)

Week 2: Oct 9 – Teaching Online & Teaching Technology

1. Technology

   o Zoom, Nectir, Gauchospace
   o Privacy and Social issues with technology

2. How to Run a Discussion Section.

   o Discussion of assigned reading.
   o Instructions for discussion section observations

Reading:

- ["Strategies for Boosting Participation" File](#)
- ["Evolve your Discussion Section into a Seminar" File](#)

- [UCSB's Instructional Development URL](#)
   o Long list of various teaching ideas and resources.
- [TA Discussion Section Observation Guidelines File](#)
   o Guidelines for discussion section observations. Includes a list of possible discussion sections to visit.

Week 3: Oct 16 – Experienced TA Panel & Grading

1. **Experienced TA Panel** #1

2. **Grading**

    - Best Practices
    - Building and Using *Practical* Rubrics
    - *Practice* – parsing prompts, building effective rubrics

3. **FERPA**

    - See https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html

4. **Join online section with your TA**

Assigned Reading Posted on GS:
- *POLS TA Manual*, pp. 18-20
- Assorted sample rubrics
- Handout on Discussion Section Observation Guidelines

Week 4: Oct 23 – UCSB Resources & More Grading
1. **1:00 p.m. - Distressed Students**: Guest speaker Armando Flores, MSW, Assistant Dean, UCSB Student Mental Health Coordination Services. Email: ajflores@ucsb.edu.

2. *More* **Grading…**

    - Hands-on: practice grading sample essays and short answer questions.
    - "Norming": How to know you're within your instructor's grading distribution guidelines.

    - Cheating, and the Office of Judicial Affairs

    3. **Evaluations** - the Nuts and Bolts: Danielle Crowder, POLS Academic Assistant

Resources Posted on GS:

- UCSB Distressed Student website
- UCSB's CARE website
- UCSB Office of Judicial Affairs website

Week 5: Oct 30 – Diversity Issues, Disabled Students, and TA Panel

1. **Experienced TA Panel #2**

2. **Mutual Respect Workshop: <mark>Tentative Date:</mark>** Richardo Alcaino, Sven Rundman, and Rachel Conklin, Mutual Respect Workshop

3. **Disabled students**: Guest Speaker: Danielle Crowder, POLS Academic Assistant

4. **Explanation of Mock Discussion Section Exercises** (beginning Week #6)

5. **Join online section with your TA**

Material Posted on GS:

- UCSB Title IX website
- UCSB's CARE website
- UCPD website, with link to "Active Shooter" training video.
- [Mock Discussion Section Exercise Instructions File](#)
  - Please take a moment to read this handout prior to developing your mock discussion section lesson plan.

Week 6: Nov 6 – Mock Discussion Section Exercise

1. **The Title IX Process:** Reporting Responsibilities regarding sexual violence and/or harassment.
   - Guest Speaker Rachel Conklin, EEOP/Title IX Office, Email Rachel.Conklin@ucsb.edu

2. First group of individual students lead 10-15-minute mock discussion sections.

Material Posted on GS:

- Mock Discussion Section Guidelines handout
- "Strategies for Boosting Participation"
- "Turning Your Discussion Section into a Seminar"
- UCSB's Instructional Development website

Week 7: Nov 13 – Mock Discussion Section Exercise

1. **Mock Discussion Section Exercise** – Second group of individual students lead 10-15-minute mock discussion sections.

2. **==Tentative Campus Safety:==** UCPD presentation on "Active Shooter" training.

3. UCPD "Shots Fired on Campus" Training Video

Week 8: Nov 20 – TA Panel & Mock Semianr

1. **Experience TA Panel** #3

2. **Mock Discussion Section Exercise** - Final group of individual students lead 10-15-minute mock discussion sections.

Week 9: Nov 29 – Thanksgiving Holiday, No Seminar

Week 10: Dec 11 – Final Thoughts

1. **Memo reflecting on discussion section observations due before 12/5 at midnight.**

   Please write up a brief memo, one to three pages should be sufficient, reflecting on what you observed in the two discussion sections you visited. Please discuss what you thought worked well, and what you might have done differently.

2. **Discussion of section observations.**

3. **Final questions, comments, observations/evaluation of the seminar.**

Material Posted on GS: Discussion Section Observation reflection paper due via submission on GauchoSpace.