

BE Departmental TA Training

Shannon Hughes, Leona Samson,
Agi Stochowiak and Rotem Gura

August 26th and 27th, 2014

Past contributors to slides (and training): Bevin
Engelward, John Essigmann, Forest White, and
Alan Jasanoff

Our next 25 min

- Training overview
- Your responsibilities
- Resources available
- Now what

**THE SECRET OF EDUCATION LIES
IN RESPECTING THE PUPIL.**

-RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Day 1 agenda: theory

- **AM lectures**
 - departmental vision + goals (Doug)
 - responsibilities + resources (Shannon)
 - pointers from a renowned teacher (Leona)
 - BE Communication Lab (Jaime)
- **AM exercises**
 - teaching + learning reflection
 - group practice creating a board
- **Lunch + chat with former TAs**
- **PM lectures and exercises**
 - teaching demo + discussion (Rotem)
 - teaching diverse populations (Agi)
- **New this year:** Recitation tips (Agi), AM

Day 2 agenda: practice

- Microteaching
 - *required* for lecture subject TAs
 - optional for lab TAs
 - 60 min sometime tomorrow → sign-up on wall!
- As presenter
 - 6 min recitation on given topic/problem
 - listen to feedback
 - receive DVD of your talk
- As audience
 - during: pretend you are a student in class
 - after: give *constructive* feedback

Agenda for SoE-wide training

- Friday, August 29th, 9am-12pm in room 3-270
- Pre-register by 8/26...do it today!
- Interactive teaching techniques
 - concept questions and demos
- Problems and pitfalls in the classroom
 - dealing with challenging situations

<http://engineering.mit.edu/programs/ta-workshop>



Teaching Assistant Workshop

Departmental philosophy



Departmental philosophy

- In BE, quality teaching is critically important
 - an SoE mandate

PPE =

Preparation

Positive Attitude

Empathy =

Quality teaching



Interesting read: <http://teaching.berkeley.edu/blog/youre-invited-celebration-mistakes>

Departmental philosophy

- Teaching experience via the TA mechanism is an important part of your education
- Instills a better understanding of our discipline



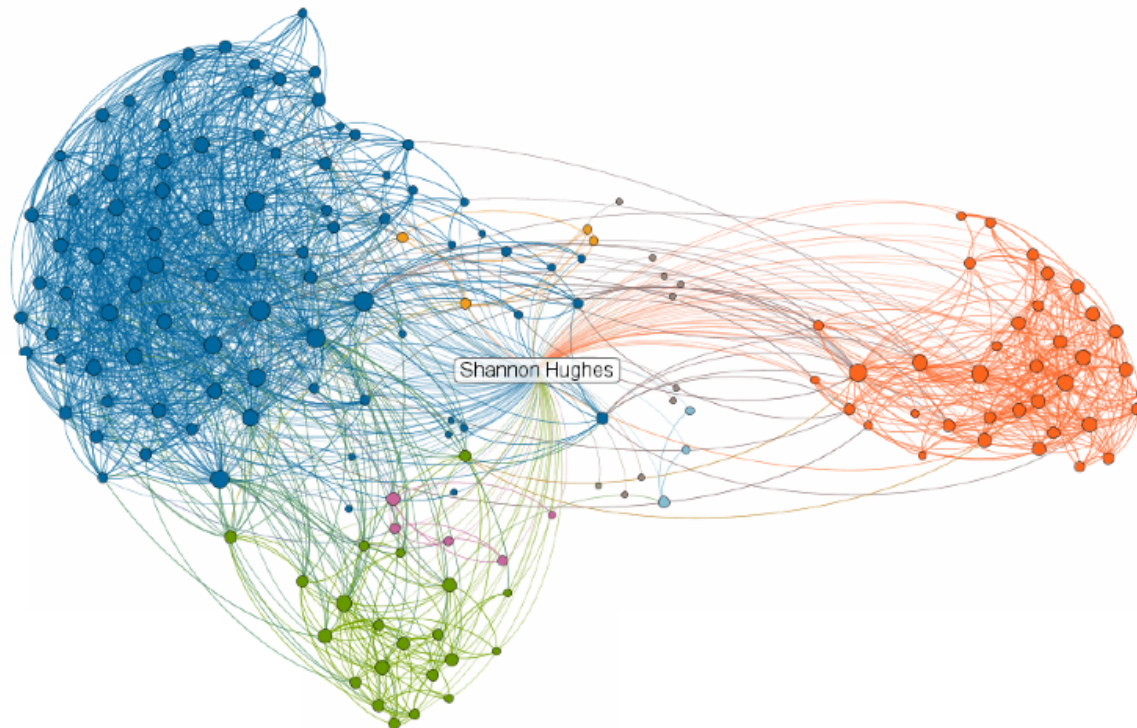
Departmental philosophy

- Builds skills
 - oral and written presentation
 - leadership
 - teamwork



Departmental philosophy

- Puts you in contact with a faculty member who probably is not your advisor
 - becomes part of your professional interactome
- Not to mention pragmatics
 - offset to tuition



FAQs about TAing in BE

- Who TAs BE classes?
 - about 30 mostly 2nd year grad students in BE
 - a few UGs and postdocs, G students from Micro/CSB/etc.
- How are assignments made?
 - Doug and Forest assign TA's with faculty input
 - goal is **good fit** based on student interests and skills
- Who pays for the time you are a TA?
 - department gets “TA Slots” from Institute + accounting fun
- Are TAs graded?
 - graduate TAs register for 20.960 (12-units)
- How much time does it take?
 - SoE guidelines call for **20-24 hours** per week

Official TA duties... in somewhat antiquated language

8.0 GRADUATE STUDENT APPOINTMENTS

8.2 Appointment Categories

8.2.2 Teaching Assistant

*The principal duties of a teaching assistant include **assisting** faculty members in classroom and laboratory instruction, **preparing apparatus** or material for demonstration, **conducting tutorials** and discussion sections, and **grading quizzes**. A full-time teaching assistant usually receives a scholarship to cover tuition costs, in addition to a stipend; a part-time teaching assistant may receive an appropriate partial tuition scholarship.*

Specific TA roles in BE

- UG lecture class TA
 - recitation, office hours, grading exams
- G lecture class TA
 - office hours, often some grading
- In some lecture classes
 - run review sessions, pre-take exams, write HWs/solutions, etc.
- Lab class TA
 - pre-run experiments, some grading, high contact hours
 - safety is of utmost importance (moral, legal issues)
- Course development
 - on more *ad hoc* basis
- Ultimately, class- and instructor-dependent
 - have **expectations-setting meeting** before classes begin

General duties in all roles

- Know your students
 - get pictures from Stellar/WebSIS
- Know your material
- Attend lecture and periodic staff meetings
- Sundry help within reason
 - help maintain course web page
 - track student grades
 - make photocopies, clean blackboards, library assistance
- Help assign final grades
 - you are the [student advocate](#)

Resources Around the Institute



Teaching resources and tools

- SoE TA Resources
 - summary tips and reading list
 - http://engineering.mit.edu/education/education_resources/ta
- Teaching & Learning Laboratory
 - guidelines for recitations
 - <http://tll.mit.edu>
- TAs/instructors from past years
 - ask directly: past challenges + successes?
 - indirect: examine past course materials + evaluations
- Current semester colleagues
 - get feedback from instructor, other TAs, or anonymous students
- Course management resources
 - Stellar (course management system): <http://stellar.mit.edu>
 - MIT libraries: can set up class resource pages
 - OpenWetWare: alternative course management – wiki

Student issues that may arise

- Health concerns
 - physical
 - mental
 - prolonged
- Personal concerns
 - serious illness or death of family member or close friend
 - traumatic events
- Academic concerns
 - missed work due to health/family issues
 - missed work due to being overextended and/or oversleeping
 - general struggle with class material
 - academic dishonesty
- All issues may lead to stress → “typical” or extreme

Student-centered resources

- Bookmark the TA Training 2014 page!
 - links to resources below and more
- MIT together website
 - support overview and lots of links!
- **S^3 (student support services)**
 - one-stop advising/referral for UGs
- MIT mental health
 - pamphlet with advice for observers
- Academic advisors (ask faculty)
- Residence-based resources
- Academic
 - BE tutors
 - BE Communications Lab
 - OME

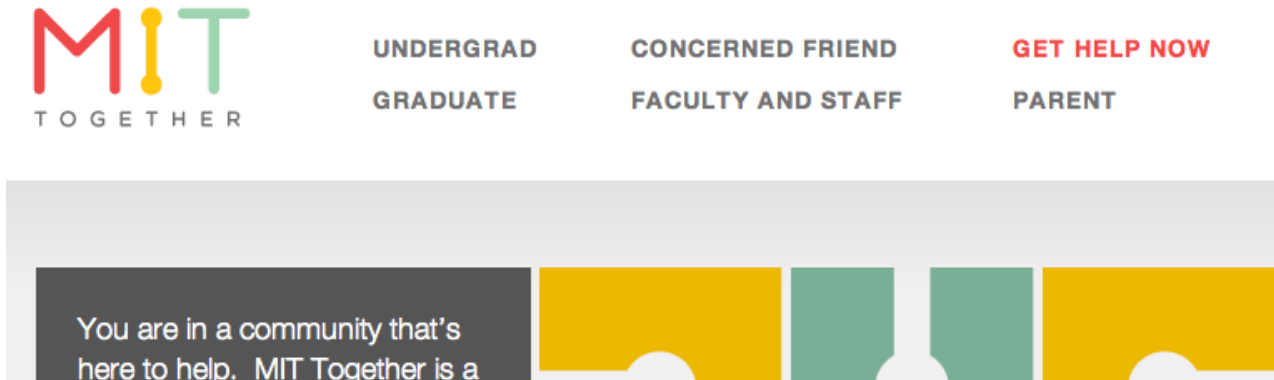
Helping Students

Please do not hesitate to talk to the faculty having unusual difficulties that you are not students are listed below.

- [MIT Together website](#) 
 - Overview of MIT support system and
- [Student Support Services](#) 
 - Room 5-104; 253.4861
 - Students who are experiencing academic
- [Resources overview from Institute-wide](#)
- [Question/issue-based resource list](#) 
- [MIT Mental Health](#) 
 - E23-3rd floor, 253.2916 (253.4481 at
 - [advice for helping students in distress](#)
 - [community wellness resources](#) 
- BE Tutoring Service

You-centered resources

- Again, MIT together <http://together.mit.edu>
- ODGE advising
 - essentially S³ for G students
 - Office of the Dean for Graduate Education
 - <http://odge.mit.edu/development/advising/>
- If a serious conflict arises
 - Department Head
 - MIT Ombudsman: <http://web.mit.edu/ombud/>



See also TA brochure



http://odge.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/TAs_2010RandR.pdf

More about academic dishonesty

- **A top concern** for past and prospective TAs
 - emotionally exhausting
- What might happen?
 - unequivocal copying or cheating (exams, reports)
 - ambiguous overstepping of resource or collaboration policy
- **Ambiguity is awful** for everyone involved
 - want to believe the best of our students
 - reluctant to damage their future prospects
 - harder to evaluate person (intent, etc.) than actions
 - likely result: inconsistent and unfair outcomes
- So, what should you do... *before* anything happens?
 - encourage faculty to establish **clear and concise standards**
 - convey standards both electronically and orally
 - ask former TAs what to emphasize and look out for

If you suspect academic dishonesty

- How is academic dishonesty dealt with?
 - Do not confront student by e-mail
 - Several paths, but the following is typical:
TA > Instructor > Department Head > DUE/DSL
> Triage > Committee on Discipline
 - Consider submitting a 'letter on file' to document repeated questionable practices
 - For more info, see *Policies and Procedures*
<http://web.mit.edu/policies/10.2.html>
- Medical issues may come up when the student is confronted – advise student to seek help
 - Again involve instructor, academic advisor
 - <http://studentlife.mit.edu/citizenship/resources>
- MIT guidelines regarding appropriate citation
 - <http://libguides.mit.edu/content.php?pid=37801>

Learning the rules

- MIT Policies and Procedures
 - <http://web.mit.edu/policies/>
- MIT Chair of the Faculty Guidelines
 - <http://web.mit.edu/faculty/teaching/termregs.pdf>
- No *required* academic exercises b/w 5-7 PM
- No *required* academic exercises Monday > 7PM
 - must offer comparable OH for optional review session
- FERPA (privacy)
 - <http://web.mit.edu/registrar/general/csip/> (see FAQ)

Where do we go from here?

- Learn more, practice, and set personal goals
- Meet and keep in touch with former TAs
- **Before 9/3: set expectations with your teaching team!**
- If you like teaching, consider: MITES, SEED, STEM, etc.

Framework for meeting to establish TA roles

Department of Biological Engineering TA Training

It's a good idea to meet with your teaching team *before* beginning your TAship. To help clarify expectations, ask your faculty instructor(s) any or all of the following questions:

(1) What will my teaching duties be?

- a. Giving recitations?*
- b. Holding office hours? (How often/long?)*
- c. Grading homeworks? Grading exams?*
- d. Pre-taking exams? (How far in advance?)*
- e. Helping design course materials?*

(2) What will my administrative duties be?

- a. Maintaining Stellar site? Which aspects?*