DEVELOPING YOUR STYLE
A Teaching Handbook for Philosophy Graduate Student Instructors

Department of Philosophy
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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a collection of suggestions for teaching assistants in philosophy derived from the experience of other GSIs. It is intended to provide a "grab-bag" of techniques, reflecting a wide variety of viewpoints on teaching, and a wide variety of effective teaching styles. The hope is that it will prove useful to people in developing their own teaching styles, and in dealing with the array of difficulties that typically confront teachers.

This handbook is meant to be used in conjunction with the departmental GSI website, and within the text you will find many helpful links to websites that provide support, guidance, and information. We recommend you take an hour or so to familiarize yourself with the website so you will be able to make full use of the resources available to you.

For new GSIs: You are bound to feel overwhelmed at times as you begin teaching. You may also find the number of suggestions contained in this handbook overwhelming. Keep in mind that the suggestions here represent the accumulated experience of many GSIs over many years. It will take some time to develop your own teaching style, and you will surely have many ups and downs along the way, as we all have. Developing a teaching style is a process that involves both learning about how to teach, and learning about yourself. Many widely different styles and techniques can be highly effective; some will work for you, others will not. You do not have to be a particular sort of teacher--e.g. the entertaining sort--to be successful. The way to find out what works best for you is to allow yourself to experiment and make mistakes. Our hope is that the suggestions we have provided will spare you some of the more common problems, and help you to have a pleasurable teaching experience and to develop a teaching style that is comfortable for you.

Comments under each heading in this handbook are arranged into two categories: those things that GSIs view as must dos and don'ts; those things that are a matter of personal style. Matters of style have been set off under the heading of *"STYLE"* from the more general shared views. Disagreements about which category an item falls into have usually been indicated.

If you have any suggestions for additions or modifications to this handbook, please contact the department's Graduate Student Mentor. Happy teaching!

B. Contributors

The following people contributed to the first edition of this handbook:

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Thanks to the many professors who have generously shared their teaching strategies and insights, many of which we drew upon in the creation of this document.

II. GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS

A. Meeting Your First Class

It is extremely important to use the full period of your first class meeting for a number of reasons: The first meeting helps to set the tone for the class, to make clear your expectations, and to communicate your seriousness about the section and about the importance of philosophical discussion; it is important to begin immediately establishing a good rapport with your students; the first class affords you time to begin to introduce them to philosophy.

Things to do the first day:

1. Begin learning your students' names. In a class of manageable size, it is important to learn each person's name. This facilitates communication in the classroom by helping to create a community in which students know and can address one another. It also communicates your interest in them as people, and tends to enhance their interest in participating.

> *STYLE***:** If you have trouble learning names, you might try the "Ann Landers" method: when a student speaks, ask his or her name, and repeat it several times in the course of responding to his or her comments. Some GSIs pass out 3x5 cards, asking students to put down their names, majors, previous philosophy, and phone numbers, as a way of helping them to learn names.

2. The first day of class you should distribute a handout indicating the following things: your name, office and room number, and office hours; your criteria for grading assignments, the official university policy regarding plagiarism (for this policy, see http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/advising/plagNote.asp; some people save the   part on plagiarism until the first paper assignment), late assignments, and so on; your expectations for what the section will be like. Be sure to explain anything you pass out: do not count on it being read and remembered.

> *STYLE:* Some people think it is not a good idea to talk too much about the grading system the first day of class, since this may get students too focused on grades, rather than on the content of the course. So it is important to strike a balance between communicating your expectations clearly, and not intimidating your students. One way to do this is by passing out a handout with the necessary information and asking students to read it for the next session, then leave time at the beginning of the next session to answer any questions they have. Also, some GSIs think it is a good idea to start off the semester with a "firm" position on late assignments, and so on. It is easier for the instructor and clearer for the students to have rules breached in the direction of looseness, than to begin with a casual atmosphere, and then try to impose rules when problems arise.

3. Explain to your students the purpose or point of studying philosophy--especially the areas of philosophy to be covered in the course. There will, of course, be different views on this question, but it is important for the GSI at least to share his or her own perspective with the students and encourage them to think about what (other than course credit) they hope to gain from studying philosophy. It is also important to explain the purpose of a discussion section-- i.e. tell them what they should gain from preparing for, attending, and participating in

section--in order to motivate them to "get involved." Additionally, you should say something about the kind of atmosphere you hope to create in the classroom, and encourage students to participate freely and to become comfortable with the possibility of making mistakes. Finally, you can encourage students to solicit help from you outside of the class when they need it.

4. Once you have taken care of the nuts and bolts, do <u>something substantive</u> with the remaining time; do not simply end the class early.

> *STYLE:* There are a number of things you can do the first day of class, even if your section meets before the first lecture, in order to stimulate student interest and begin introducing them to philosophy. Some ideas:
>
> (a) Have a discussion about what they (and you) think philosophy is, and their expectations for the course. Why did they decide to take a philosophy course? What do they expect to learn?
>
> (b) Have a discussion about the importance of learning to think clearly and carefully, giving them examples--e.g. from television, etc.--of bad reasoning.
>
> (c) If you know of an issue that will be discussed in the class for which you are a TA, you might begin to get them thinking about that issue. (e.g. Present a case that raises a problem about whether we have Free Will.)
>
> (d) Have the students introduce themselves and then say something about themselves-- either why they are taking the course, or one fact they would like the rest of the class to know about themselves.

B. Organizing Classroom Time: Leading and Motivating Discussion

> There are three central things to keep in mind, however you decide to structure your section:
>
> The first is that having a good rapport with your students and between the students is absolutely crucial to their learning. Through your own behavior you can establish that your section is a community of mutually supportive inquirers, not a battleground. Philosophy is not a competitive venture: it is a cooperative venture in which students have the right to be treated with respect both by you and by other students, and the right to learn from others in that community besides the teacher.
>
> The second is that you provide for them a <u>model</u> of philosophical methodology. It is important to keep this in mind and self-consciously model for them various philosophical skills, such as clarifying a question, drawing a distinction, raising an objection, setting out an argument, and so on. Tell them what you are doing as you are doing it.
>
> Finally, it is important to allow yourself to experiment with a variety of techniques, so that you can learn about your strengths and weaknesses and begin to develop your own effective teaching style. Be generous with yourself, as well as with your students.

Some general points about leading discussions:

1. Do not repeat the instructor's lecture. Your aim is to get your students talking. If you respond to their silence by filling in with a lecture, this will reinforce their silence. Don't be afraid of some silence. Learn to wait for 15 seconds (try this out so you know what 15 seconds feels like); then rephrase the question.

2. Be clear about what you are asking for when you pose a question. Avoid questions that are so general that students cannot answer them, or so narrow that the answer is "obvious." (In the latter case students are sometimes afraid the obvious answer is wrong.) Various sorts of questions can be posed to open and encourage discussion:

(a) Informational questions ask people to explain material from the lecture or reading. Such questions give you important information about how well the material has been understood.

(b) You can ask questions that invite them to explain the relationships between concepts, theories, positions, etc.

(c) You can ask questions that call for them to apply concepts, theories, etc. For example, bring in an item from the newspaper that connects with issues you have been discussing. (e.g. Consider the case of King Boots, the dog who was "tried" and found "guilty" of murder. What would theories of free will say about this?)

(d) You can ask them to take a position on a question, or comment on a position on a question. (e.g. Why does it seem odd to hold animals morally responsible for what they do?)

3. Discussion will be encouraged if you work at developing your own communication skills, in particular, your own ability to be a good listener, to clarify a student's comments or questions before responding or soliciting responses from other students, to reinterpret student comments when they are off the point so that their comments do apply (i.e. find something good and relevant in what they are saying), and to pull the discussion together and keep students focused on one issue at a time.

4. Your own responses to students should be aimed at creating a non-judgmental environment, and at establishing trust. Misunderstandings can be corrected without telling the student that he or she is wrong. (e.g. You can simply state the correction, and whenever possible, say why the misunderstanding nevertheless contains an important or interesting point.) On the other hand, too much praise of students' comments can also lead them to feel that they are being evaluated. The way you respond to students will communicate to them how it is appropriate for them to respond to each other. (e.g. Encouraging them to paraphrase each others remarks or questions before responding teaches them to be good listeners.) If you respond respectfully and constructively to students and discourage disrespectful responses, everyone will feel more comfortable talking.

5. Be aware of the physical setup of your class. If possible, rearrange the room so that your students will focus less on you and more on each other. Even when the desks are nailed to the floor, you can ask students to face towards the center of the room, so they can see and talk to each other.

6. Let students know at the end of each class session what is on the agenda for the next meeting and how they should prepare themselves for it--i.e. what to read, what particular points or questions to think about, etc. It is much easier for students to participate if they know in advance what the specific focus of discussion will be. The GSI can be more or less specific on this, as appropriate. (e.g. Sometimes you might just tell them that next time discussion will focus on whatever questions they raise about such-and-such.)

STYLE: GSIs use a wide variety of techniques for stimulating class discussion and structuring class time. Some ideas:

- Raise questions about points from the lecture that you suspect may not have been well understood.

- Pull the content of the lecture together with a question that is focused, provocative, and expressed in terms that students can relate to.

- Make a ridiculous statement and defend it.

- Make individual students responsible for leading discussion once during the semester.

- Divide the class into groups and have a debate.

- Bring in items from the news, literature, pop-culture, etc. that pertain to an issue discussed class.

- Ask students to relate a topic from class to other classes they are taking.

- Conduct sessions in which you spend the hour discussing matters of form, such as how to analyze arguments, how to write a paper, how to read a philosophical article (e.g. read a passage aloud and have students analyze it). It can be useful to have such sessions every 3 or 4 weeks.

- Spend some sessions explicitly going over different types of arguments in class (e.g. analogy). Have the class do exercises in which they distill passages form their readings into premise/conclusion form, and then analyze the arguments premise by premise. If this kind of skill is developed in class, it will be possible for students to utilize it in their papers.

- Try having small groups of students work together on a problem, and then present their results to the class. This works best when each group works on slightly different projects so that each group will learn from the others. Small group work can allow more students to participate and allows shy people to discuss topics in a less intimidating setting. It also makes the class as a whole a little less formal and allows the TA to teach in a more informal way. Typically, there are ongoing concerns in discussion sections about how to encourage shy people to talk and how to discourage rude or aggressive people from monopolizing discussion.

STYLE: Various techniques one can use to encourage shy people to talk:

- Require each member of the class to stop by once for office hours early in the semester. Talk with each of them and communicate your interest in hearing what they have to say in class. Some people do this after the first paper is returned. (This can also make students at ease with seeking you out for assistance in the future.)

- Give positive (only) class credit for participation, and tell students you will be doing so.

- Establish a practice of calling on people randomly, to help insure that people do the reading and feel involved in the class. This also prevents a few from monopolizing discussion, and if done non-aggressively and impartially, should not be too intimidating.

STYLE: Dealing with rude or aggressive students is a bit trickier. Some suggestions:

- Sometimes it can help to meet with the person outside of class. Hear the person out. If the person feels that he or she knows you and is understood, he or she may be less likely to strike out in class.

- Sometimes it is a matter of the student really wanting to impress you. When this is the case, you can encourage the student to talk to you on the side, and enlist him or her to help you to get others in the class talking.

- Sometimes rudeness is best ignored. Sometimes it is best to respond directly and firmly, but non-defensively and non-aggressively. Responding with a sense of humor can be helpful.

- If a student is really "out to get you," you may need to respond firmly publicly, both for your own sake (in terms of maintaining appropriate control of your class), and so that your students do not feel frustrated about your failure to deal with the problem. (e.g. "X, when you interrupt like this it makes it difficult for others to follow the lecture/discussion. We are interested to hear what you have to say. But we/I also want the opportunity to express our/my points without interruption.") How it will be helpful to respond will depend on the student involved, and why he or she is behaving in a particular way. Is he or she angry or confused about what the class is supposed to be about? Does he or she not feel heard? And so on. You might probe a bit to see what is going on before choosing a strategy. Unfortunately, there is no real substitute for experience in order to become adept at dealing with problem situations. Keep in mind that your GSI Mentors and the GSI Committee Chair would be glad to meet with you to discuss these issues.

C. Handouts

Probably the two most important handouts to provide for your students are first, a handout on the first day explaining your grading criteria and policies (see Meeting Your First Class), and secondly, a handout explaining how to write a philosophy paper.

With regard to the latter, a number of points are worth including:

1. How to structure a philosophy paper. Do you want a particular format? e.g. Should introductions be written in a particular way? and so on.

2. What a paper should include (e.g. an introduction of a certain kind; arguments for your thesis; replies to objections; explanations of technical or ambiguous terms).

3. What to avoid in writing a philosophy paper (e.g. appeals to authority or emotion; writing a purely expository paper).

4. What plagiarism is and how to avoid it (e.g. Do you expect them to do any outside reading? What sorts of references and bibliography do you expect them to provide?).

If the students are assigned more than one type of paper, it is a good idea to distribute a handout with respect to each explaining the purpose of that particular assignment and the standards it should meet.

STYLE: Other kinds of handouts can be very helpful:

- Study questions to help with the reading

- A handout explaining how to read a philosophical article or book

- A handout setting out an argument from the reading

- A handout on how to analyze arguments

- A handout with definitions to commonly used philosophical terms, like "metaphysical" or "epistemological."

- Copies of a newspaper items or pop-culture pieces that can be used as cases to structure discussion

D. Grading/Commenting on Papers

1. **Grading Papers:** Your first time teaching Michigan undergrads you may be surprised by how grade-oriented they are. Many of them plan to apply to business school, law school, medical school, or graduate school of some other type, and they will let you know early in the semester that they need, and intend, to get an A in your class. Furthermore, many of them are accustomed to getting A's (which is how they got into Michigan to begin with.) This can put you in the awkward position of knowing that, by giving them anything less than an A, you may be dashing their cherished dreams. Here are a couple things to keep in mind when facing this type of pressure:

a) It is not your job to judge whether your students will make a good doctors or business people, and the grade you assign them has nothing to do with such a judgment. The grades you assign should always reflect the philosophical merit of their work, and nothing else.

b) The worst students are those who are unwilling to do any work at all. But also bad are students who are willing to work only because getting a good grade is instrumental to some other goal (like getting into business school). If your students ask you, "What do I need to do to get an A in this class?" refuse to answer the question on the grounds that it is the wrong question for them to ask. Remind them that the proper questions to ask are "How can I become a better philosopher?" and "How can I be a responsible thinker?" and, of course, "What's true?" If their only goal in the class is to get an A, they almost surely don't deserve an A.

c) Your primary concern for your students should NOT be "Do they like me?" but rather "Are they learning?" So, while it may be tempting to inflate grades to make your

students happy and make them like you, it does them a disservice. Grades are a primary tool for communicating your judgment of a student's progress, and for their sake, you should be honest.

Despite the fact that the above three points are fairly obvious, it is almost inevitable that you will have students complain about their grades, or otherwise pressure you into raising their grades. There are two main strategies that can help reduce the occurrence of this behavior.

a) Set clear grading criteria, make them available to the students, and then stick to them when you evaluate students' work. (Click here for an example of such criteria.)

b) Give lots of written feedback, of both the positive and the constructive variety. (See *Commenting on Papers* below). This is the best way to prevent the question, "Why didn't I get an A on this paper?"

STYLE: Some also suggest that you give a grading spiel on the first day of class to let students know that you have rigorous grading standards. The danger of taking this approach is that, if you put too much emphasis on grades early on, the students will concentrate on grades rather than on the content of the course. So, a better approach might be to focus the first day's spiel on the content of the class and what you hope they will learn, and then mention that the grades you assign will reflect the degree to which their work demonstrates that they have absorbed material and put it into practice.

So what grades should you assign? The LSA grading system is explained in the Bulletin, which can be found here. There are no hard and fast rules about what the grade distribution for your class should be, but as a general rule of thumb, the average grade should be between 83 and 86 (the B range). Although you should not feel compelled to conform your average to a B, some feel that deviating too far would be unfair.

STYLE: In terms of grading techniques, some GSIs feel very strongly that one must blind grade to insure fairness. Others do not believe this is necessary. For example, GSIs who work closely with their students reviewing drafts of their papers may consider blind grading dishonest, since they are well aware of whose paper it is. When it is feasible to blind grade (especially with exams), this is recommended. If you have concerns about the fairness of your assessment of an assignment, a good strategy is to ask a fellow GSI or the professor of your class to briefly look it over and give you a second opinion.

STYLE: GSIs disagree about whether class participation should make a distinct contribution to students' grades, or whether it should only be used to settle borderline cases. People who think it should only be used to settle borderline cases argue that it is the students' written work that counts, and that too many people have trouble speaking up in class, and too many talk regardless of the quality of their contributions, to make this policy good. On the other side, giving positive (only) credit for class participation is a way of telling students that it is an important part of the course, and something for which they need to make an effort. It communicates that doing philosophy involves discussion as much as it involves writing.

2. **Commenting on Papers:** The guiding idea behind the following general suggestions is the students are entitled to have their work read carefully and to receive comments that are clear and constructive, and that explain why a particular grade was received and what they might do to improve their work. Careful commenting will spare your students needless

confusion and anxiety, and will spare you the headache of grade disputes. Some general points about commenting on papers:

a) Always begin by saying something good about the paper. Sometimes you may find this difficult; sometimes impossible. But most papers have many positive features, which you can begin your comments by mentioning. (e.g. "You have some interesting ideas about a difficult issue. I especially like what you have to say about...."; "Your paper shows good comprehension and is well-organized....") If it looks like the student has found an issue particularly difficult or frustrating, you might even begin by empathizing with his or her frustration.

b) Leave a clean break between your positive comments and your "negative" ones. The idea behind this is to make sure that each student receives some *unequivocally positive* feedback. When comments say things like "You have interesting things to say, but...", the qualification at the end has the effect of taking back the original positive comments. Formulate your positive remarks so that you feel you can express them honestly without qualifying them, and make sure there is a clear separation between your positive and negative remarks.

c) Negative comments should be frank and to the point, but constructive, and expressed in a hearable way. They should be expressed as suggestions for how to improve this and future assignments. A student, ideally, should be able to read comments and understand both why he or she received a particular grade, and what strategies to pursue to improve his or her work. Keep in mind that too many suggestions can be overwhelming, so you might focus in your final comments on a paper on a few general ways in which it might be improved.

d) It is important not to intimidate students with negative substantive comments about the plausibility of the positions they defend in papers, as if they were writing a critical response in a philosophy journal. Often students will defend positions that you think are pretty clearly indefensible, or that there is much to say against, and there is a temptation to overwhelm a student with your insights on the issue. It is better from the standpoint of the students' learning if you point out just a few of the problems with what they are saying, and focus the bulk of your comments on the *structure* of the paper--i.e. is the issue carefully defined; are there arguments; what types of arguments are employed and are there suppressed premises that need explicit defense; are objections considered; are examples needed, etc.

e) Comments on papers should focus on those features of papers that correspond to the criteria students have been told will be used in grading their work (e.g. comprehension, argumentation, organization, or whatever). It can be helpful to students to separate comments into those pertaining to the content of the paper, and those pertaining to the writing and organization.

f) Try to catch English and writing problems early on. See F-1 below (Referrals for assistance with learning and writing skills) for details on how to handle students with below standard writing abilities.

STYLE:

- Some GSIs use a set of abbreviations, distributed in advance to their students, in commenting on papers, for frequently recurring points (e.g. TNS (this needs support),

AUTH (appealing to an authority), WEM (what exactly do you mean)).

- Sometimes it is useful to use comment sheet. (A preformatted pages that prompts you to judge work in accordance with set standards. This is a way of making sure that your commenting is consistent and reflects the criteria you said you would use in grading assignments.

- Some people comment primarily in the margins of papers, with minimal comments at the end. Others put numbers in the margins and write comments on a separate sheet, presenting more general comments at the end of the paper. In general it is a good idea to give some details along the way (whether you do this in the margins or not), with a summary at the end that provides an overview of the paper as a whole and areas to concentrate on for improvement.

- Some GSIs make it a policy to call in students who receive below average grades on their papers and exams to talk them over, make sure the comments are clear, and provide encouragement.

How much commenting is too much? How much is too little? Difficult question. If you give too little feedback, your students will not understand their grades or how to improve their work. If you give too much, they may feel overwhelmed and not know how to begin to improve their work. So perhaps the thing to do as you are grading is to ask yourself the following questions: (1) Do my comments explain why this assignment received the grade it did? (2) Will the student be able to read these comments and know how to improve? As for amount, you might think in terms of roughly one page per five page paper, although this will vary depending on the paper, and on whether any difficulties the student was experiencing with the paper are academic or motivational. (Be prepared for the fact that some students will not bother to read the comments you have written.)

E. Teaching Students How to Write Papers and Take Exams

1. **Papers**

Students tend to find writing philosophy papers extremely difficult and quite unlike anything else they have had to write before. So it is important to devote some time to teaching them how to go about writing them.

STYLE:

- Spend a session or two during the semester talking about how to write a philosophy paper, using a handout as you go. Explain how philosophy papers differ from other papers (e.g. history).

- Talk to them about how to outline a paper.

- Have a sample paper available for them to look at.

- Take a sample (non-assigned) paper topic and talk them through some strategies for how one might go about working on such a topic.

2. **Exams**

You can help your students to prepare for exams by telling them in advance the purpose of

the exam--what will it be testing for (e.g. comprehension, ability to analyze a problem, ability to construct and defend a position, etc.).

STYLE:

- Sometimes it can be helpful just to explain to your students some general points about test-taking. For example, it is best for people to answer first on an exam the questions that they think they can answer best. This helps to insure that the exam reflects their best work, that they use their time well, and that they maintain confidence during the exam period.

- Take a practice essay question and discuss with your students how to deal with ambiguous, vague, or complicated questions.

- You might also discuss with your students how much detail and exposition of views you expect in an answer to an essay question.

- You might spend time going over the grading of an exam.

- If you are teaching your own course, you can place a sample exam on reserve.

- Hold review sessions before exams. (To reserve a room for a review session, email phil-ug-coord@umich.edu at least 48 hours in advance.)

F. Dealing with Students' Academic, Personal, and Disciplinary Problems

1. Referrals for Assistance with Learning and Writing Skills

In order to write good philosophy papers your students must have good writing skills. While it is reasonable for you to give them some feedback on the technical aspects of their writing (grammar, spelling, sentence construction, vocabulary, and organization), students who are struggling with fundamentals need more help. It is important that you refer them to outside help for at least three reasons. First, you need all the time you can get to focus on teaching philosophy; grammar lessons will cut into this time. Second, a student may need more help than you are qualified, or have time, to give. And third, the university resources available to students are substantial and have proven successful. In short, you should let someone who is trained, and who is being paid to help students with writing, help your students with writing. There are three main resources for students, depending on the source of the problem.

1. Sweetland Writing Center (https://lsa.umich.edu/sweetland)—You can actually have someone from Sweetland come to your class to give a quick spiel on the resources available at Sweetland, which include one-on-one consultations, workshops, and peer tutoring.

2. English Language Institute (http://lsa.umich.edu/eli) —The appropriate place to refer a student who is suffering primarily because English is not his or her native language is the ELI.

3. Services for Students with Disabilities (https://ssd.umich.edu/) — Occasionally, a physical disability or learning disability may interfere with a student's ability to produce up-to-standard writing. If this is the case, your student might find SSWD helpful. Caution: never assume the role of diagnosing a disability as the problem. Only if a student suggests to you that he fears a disability is getting in the way of his ability to perform up to standards should you consider referring him to SSWD.

2. Referrals for Assistance with Personal Problems

Inattentiveness, late or incomplete assignments, or discrepancies between written work and verbal ability are often symptomatic of personal problems a student is having. These can include difficulties dealing with the many adjustments to college life, a current crisis, an ongoing problem, or just having taken on too much in a particular semester. Don't be afraid to call in a student who is doing poorly in your class, especially since some students react to doing poorly by withdrawing. (If the person is doing poorly because he or she does not want to work and simply needs the credit, he or she will let you know.) If a student approaches you with a problem, or if, while discussing a student's problems in your course, it becomes clear that the student's problems are not (primarily) academic, it can be appropriate to refer him or her to counseling services (http://www.umich.edu/~caps/). The problem may also require you to alleviate some of the student's immediate stress, so you might (for example) negotiate what you believe to be a fair extension on an assignment, or require additional meetings with you to work on the material. It is important to strike a balance that relieves the student's distress and respects his or her autonomy, while setting limits (both so as to insure fairness to your other students, and so that the student continues to have some structure to work within).

> *STYLE:* Opinions differ regarding how open you ought to be when listening to details about your student's personal lives. However, everyone agrees that you should avoid, to the greatest extent possible, adopting the roles of parent, confidant, guidance counselor, or therapist. While you want to encourage students to see you in office hours as often as they want, remember that your office hours should be used only for academic—primarily philosophical—matters. For example, your students should not be dropping by to give you an update on their new romantic relationship.

3. Disciplinary Problems

There are two potential disciplinary problems you may face: a) students who disrupt class with disrespectful or inappropriate behavior and b) students who engage in academic dishonesty.

a) Misbehavior is not a major problem in college classes, but it does occur. How you should deal with it depends on the particular situation. Most GSIs agree that it is best to deal with disruptive behavior as soon as it occurs, most simply by respectfully asking the student to return their attention to the class, or to rephrase their comments in a more respectful manner. However, if you do not feel like you can correct the behavior with out embarrassing a student, the best course of action is to call them into your office and discuss the behavior with them there. Remember, there is a good chance that, if you embarrass a student, he/she will interpret your behavior as lack of respect, and return the favor in kind.

b) With regards to academic dishonesty, please be aware that problems with academic dishonesty have been severe on this campus in recent years, and almost every GSI has had to deal with it in some form or another. You can help to prevent academic dishonesty by announcing a clear policy early in the semester and in writing. (e.g. Plagiarized work will receive an E and a report to the Academic Judiciary.) Discuss with your students what plagiarism is, giving them examples. Some people honestly

do not know, and have never learned proper footnoting. You might explain to your students what you want by way of footnoting and bibliography, and whether you expect them to do any extra reading to write their papers. Evidently if you report a case of plagiarism and the student is not convicted, you will have to average the grade as usual. So you will need to keep in mind how you would have graded the paper had you not thought it was plagiarized. Some suggestions for how to deal with a case of academic dishonesty once you've encountered it:

> 1. Be sure to verify that academic dishonesty has occurred before you proceed further. Document what you find.

> 2. Notify the professor of the course of what you have found, and discuss how you want to proceed.

> 3. Notify the student that the professor has been informed and of the procedures that you are undertaking.

> *STYLE:* GSIs disagree about the appropriate way to handle cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. While some feel that such cases ought to be prosecuted and left to the Academic Judiciary to decide, others are concerned that students be made to redo assignments and to learn from that, rather than suffering from having a record of academic dishonesty. Those who feel such cases should be prosecuted argue that you really are not doing your student a favor by dealing with dishonesty leniently: first, leniency is sometimes misunderstood and perceived as unfairness on your part; secondly, your (non-lenient) intervention may prevent the student from getting into worse trouble down the road. Additionally, they argue that handling such cases more leniently than University guidelines require is both unfair to other students in the class, and encourages academic dishonesty by teaching students that the worst that can happen to them if they are caught is that they will have to do the assignment they were supposed to do anyway.

G. Sexual Harassment/Involvement with Students

From University SPG 201.89-0: It is the policy of the University of Michigan to maintain an academic and work environment free of sexual harassment for students, faculty, and staff. Sexual harassment is contrary to the standards of the University community. It diminishes individual dignity and impedes equal employment and educational opportunities and equal access to freedom of academic inquiry. Sexual harassment is a barrier to fulfilling the University's scholarly, research, educational, and service missions. It will not be tolerated at the University of Michigan….

…In 1986 the University's Senate Assembly adopted a statement of principle concerning relationships between faculty (including teaching assistants) and students. The University concurs with the Assembly's position that sexual relationships, even mutually consenting ones, are a basic violation of professional ethics and responsibility when the faculty member has any professional responsibility for the student's academic performance or professional future.

Please read the complete University policies regarding sexual harassment and consensual relationships here. Feel free to contact the chair of the GSI Committee or the Graduate Coordinator if you have any questions or encounter situations that you are unsure about.

H. Creating a Non-Discriminatory Learning Environment

Avoid using any examples that involve stereotypes whether they are based on race, religion, gender, sexual preference, physical appearance, or developmental or physical disability. Do not ask any individual to represent a group to which they may appear to belong.

Understand that a certain aggressive philosophical style can be especially intimidating to students. Small group discussions, for example, can help to lessen intimidation and include more students in class discussion. You might also check to see whether your grading standards reward only those who exhibit this aggressive style in their work, as opposed to those who exhibit philosophical acumen of a more subtle (less traditionally acceptable) sort.

Be aware also that students may feel less comfortable approaching you for assistance. Make sure all your students know you are available and happy to help.

CRLT has provided further information on strategies for multicultural and inclusive teaching; see http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multicultural-teaching/inclusive-teaching-strategies

I. Departmental Procedures and Resources

We in the Philosophy Department are fortunate to have some of the most helpful, reliable, and friendly office support around. The office staff makes our jobs as teachers much easier, and in return, they ask only that we follow a few simple procedures to keep things flowing smoothly in the department. Here are those procedures:

1) If you cancel class, contact the office (philosophy.staff@umich.edu) and the professor who teaches the lecture as soon as possible. Please see the extended policy on canceling a class.

2) Review session rooms should be requested through the office (phil-ug-coord@umich.edu). They need at least 48 hours notice.

3) Student assignments should be handed in via one of the following methods: in class, during office hours, sent electronically, submitted through Canvas or left in the Philosophy Drop Box with the instructor's name clearly indicated. Students SHOULD NOT leave assignments directly in an instructor's mailbox. FYI, the office staff does not date stamp material received. Material should be returned to students via one of the following methods: in class, during office hours, electronically, or in file cabinet in Philosophy Main Office (If you leave assignments in the file cabinet, students can pick them up anytime the office is open. Just make sure you place their work in a large manila envelope clearly marked with your name, the title of your class, and your section number). Give the envelope to the work study student(s).

4) Instructors can print their own class lists through Wolverine Access. Instructors are able to e-mail their class also through Wolverine Access, on the same page as printing a class roster. Contact 4-HELP (734.764.4357) if you are unsure how to navigate the system.

5) All courses are expected to have a course site via Canvas. Please contact Instructional Support Service (ISS) for help (734.615.0100 or iss-help@umich.edu).Submitting Grades: All instructors and faculty members will be required to submit their grades on-line via Wolverine Access. For more information, see https://csprod.dsc.umich.edu/htmldoc/eng/dftie/lsaa/htm/images/CU_SGRD_GradeEntry_SS.pdf

III. TEACHING YOUR OWN CLASS

A. Reading Preparation and Distribution

So, you've decided what readings you will assign. Now how do you get them to your students? Keep in mind, your students already have a multitude of factors to discouraging them from doing the reading for your course. So, the more convenient you can make it for them to access the reading, the better. Other than that, the format you use for readings is a matter of personal preference. Here are the four main options (plus, you can use a combination of two or more of these) with considerations for and against each.

1. Textbooks. You must order these far in advance (5 to 6 weeks) to ensure they will be ready for purchase at the beginning of the semester.

2. Posted On-Line (via Canvas). This is the preferred method for providing access to additional articles that you will use in your course. If you are assigning additional books, though, you will need to use library reserves (see #3).

3. Course Reserves

Course Reserves for Philosophy is located at the Shapiro Library which is open 24/7. Books, Course packs and FILMS can be place on Reserves. Film reserves are viewed 'in house' at the Askwith Media Library; e-mail, askwithmedia@umich.edu for requests.

The link for main website is http://www.lib.umich.edu/course-reserves
To make a request the form: https://www.lib.umich.edu/cr/request

From the website:
The University Library supports curriculum needs with its course reserves service The service offers faculty the opportunity to make books, coursepacks, CDs, and other physical items available to students. These items are available to students at the libraries for short periods of time to maximize access to high use and high demand materials.

B. Preparing a Syllabus

Sample syllabi (as well as handouts, paper topics, and exams) are available on the GSI website. It can be quite useful to look at other people's syllabi before finalizing your own.

Your syllabus should typically include the following (but see Style-3):

1. Course requirements/assignments.

2. Grading/academic dishonesty policy.

3. Criteria for grading.

4. Books and where to get them.

5. Some schedule of assignments and due dates.

STYLE: GSIs provide syllabi with varying degrees of detail.

1. Some think it is a good idea to schedule a bit too much material the first time around. (Let your students know you have done this.) This gives you a bit of leeway. But don't feel you have to hurry or cover everything. (Be careful, though, not to ask people to buy a lot

of things that they may not need for the course.)

2. Some think a syllabus should have clearly defined periods for general discussion. Otherwise a few assertive people will be the only ones participating.

3. Some prefer to talk about academic dishonesty and criteria for grading in a handout distributed when the first paper is due, rather than in the syllabus itself.

4. Some syllabi are arranged around a few important issues; others are more historically oriented, focusing on a number of classic texts; still others involve a mix of these approaches, with a general theme running through the course.

How much reading material you assign will depend upon your style. Do you want to cover a lot of material? Or do you prefer to proceed slowly and in detail through a smaller amount of material? There can be drawbacks to each approach: if you try to cover too much, students can feel overwhelmed and lost; if you discuss less material, but in greater depth than they are ready for, they can get bored. A good rule of thumb: assign approximately one 20 page article per 2 sessions, depending upon the article and how in depth you will go.

C. Assignments

If you are leading discussion sections, the instructor for the most part will determine the assignments. In some cases discussion section leaders will have some leeway in assigning work, and of course GSIs teaching their own courses will need to determine assignments. Of course, the nature and quantity of assigned work will depend on which course you are teaching. You can review sample syllabi on-line to get a sense of what's been done in the past. Here are examples of kinds of assignments that can enhance student learning:

1. Give a short assignment that requires exposition only of some part of the text.

2. Give a short assignment on analyzing arguments.

3. Have your students write a short dialogue in which they state the competing positions, identify and present the arguments for each position, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of those positions and arguments.

4. Require a series of short assignments designed to build up to a full length paper.

5. Require an ungraded draft paper, in preparation for a graded paper.

6. Assign at least one 5-7 page paper.

7. Give periodic quizzes rather than a midterm, to test for comprehension and help them keep up with the reading.

8. Require a rewrite of one of their papers. Students learn a great deal by rewriting.

9. Exams are typically essay exams that are either in-class exams, take-home exams, or questions-distributed-in-advance exams (where you narrow the selection on the day of the exam).

D. Formulating Paper Topics, Exams, and Handouts

1. Paper Topics

Paper topics can be constructed in a variety of ways. However you construct them, be aware of your criteria for grading as you do so, and of what you want them to accomplish in this particular assignment.

> *STYLE:*
>
> 1. It can help to spark interest if you begin a topic with a puzzling quotation, or an example that poses the problem in a particularly clear fashion. e.g. Parfit's science fiction cases make for interesting topics on personal identity.
>
> 2. You might look for some item in the newspaper that shows how a philosophical issue creeps up in a contemporary issue (e.g. free will and Michigan's penalty of "guilty, but mentally ill").
>
> It is a good idea to give new paper topics each semester and avoid using those from classes for which you have been a GSI to discourage plagiarism.

2. Exams

Exams tend to be essay exams. In writing an essay exam, make sure questions are clearly formulated, and again, that you know in advance what you are looking for by way of answers. For example, do you want your students simply to explain a difficult theory or argument?; Do you want them to draw connections between different theories, issues, and sections of the course?; Do you want them to analyze an issue or position, or provide a critique?

> *STYLE:* In writing an exam or a quiz, you might ask various sorts of questions:
>
> 1. Short answer questions that test for comprehension.
>
> 2. Short questions that test for comprehension by requiring application of theories to a case.
>
> 3. Longer questions that test for comprehension by requiring application of theories to a case.
>
> 4. Long questions that require students not only to explain and apply positions, but critically evaluate them and/or argue for a position of their own.

3. Handouts

See the GSI website for samples of handouts that GSIs have found useful. Which handouts will most benefit your students will depend on your own teaching style. But students generally appreciate any handouts that help them with their own reading and writing for the course (such as study questions and "how to write papers").

F. Preparing Lectures/Ratio of Lecture to Discussion

1. Preparing Lectures

There are many ways to structure a lecture. Whatever you do, it is important to develop a lecture style that maximally exploits your teaching strengths and that enables you to model the philosophical methods you are attempting to teach. This modeling can be achieved by means of a Socratic-Method style of teaching, as well as by means of a more straightforward lecture style.

Before you write your lectures, you might begin by thinking a bit about your previous teaching experience: analyze your strengths and weaknesses. Above all else, do not be afraid to experiment, since that is crucial to developing your own style.

STYLE: Here are two of the many possible ways of structuring a lecture:

1. You might develop your lecture by thinking in terms of the following structure, suggested by Jack Meiland:

--PROBLEM

--POSITION

--ARGUMENT

--OBJECTION

--REPLY

EXAMPLE:

PROBLEM: What is Free Will?; Do we have it?; Are we ever morally responsible for what we do? (It often helps to introduce the problem(s) by means of a simple, concrete example--something that makes it feel like a problem.)

POSITION: Soft Determinism (What does the position maintain? A position can be clarified, in part, by comparing it with other positions, and in particular, with others to which it is superficially similar.)

ARGUMENT: What arguments can be given for this position? Why do its proponents believe it? (Here you have the opportunity to distinguish arguments from assertions. This can also provide a means of introducing discussion of what an argument is and what makes for a good or bad argument. You might set out the argument in steps and help them to analyze it. You can also here demonstrate the importance of understanding a position sympathetically, before one begins to criticize it.)

OBJECTION: What objections might be raised to the arguments and to this position?

REPLY: How might one defend the position against objections?

(You might use this as a way to stress the importance to an adequate defense of a position that one respond to objections, which is something they will need to understand in writing their own papers.)

2. In many cases lectures can be structured by outlining an article, or a section of a book. You can begin by putting the main divisions of the outline on the board before class begins, and then fill in the outline, writing main points on the board as you go. This can be useful in many ways:

--It can be used to teach students how to read a philosophy methodology, in terms of the overall structure and defense of a position.

2. Ratio of Lecture to Discussion

Most GSIs agree--the more discussion the better. In teaching your own course, you will need to make sure the general structure of the course is conducive to discussion. (See section II-B for suggestions on leading discussion.)

STYLE:

1. Some GSIs think it is important to schedule discussion time in one's syllabus, or at least, to have designated periods for discussion. This insures that students have enough time to talk, and helps to make sure more students are included (as opposed to those few who are comfortable raising questions during lecture).

2. While some GSIs advise against mixing lecture and discussion, others find that this can work well.

3. Some GSIs especially favor small group activities or class debates.

Appendix 1: Code of Conduct for LSA

Printed from https://lsa.umich.edu/lsa/faculty-staff/student-academic-affairs.html (Click on the "Academic Judiciary Manual of Procedures")

Appendix 2:SPG 201.89-0 http://spg.umich.edu/policy/201.89-0

Appendix 3: Summary of Transcript Notations

from: http://www.lsa.umich.edu/saa/publications/bulletin/archive/01-02/chapter4/grades.html#transnote