

Environmental Studies Program, UCSB

TA Handbook

PREFACE

Welcome to the Environmental Studies Program. We look forward to working with you! First-class Teaching Assistants are invaluable to ES instructors and students, and a critical element in the program's success. This Training Manual has been designed to help you with your job as a Teaching Assistant. Please, read it carefully. We welcome critical comments and suggestions for improvement.

In order to make the Manual as complete as possible, not all sections will be equally applicable to every teaching assistant working for the program. Please, keep in mind that working as a TA for different Environmental Studies classes involves different activities and requirements. For instance, although most ES TAs are expected to conduct sections for the students, this is not always the case. In some classes the obligations of the TAs are limited to class attendance, help with writing and grading the exams, and perhaps holding office hours for the students. Testing procedures as well as homework requirements are different for every class, and not all Professors require their TAs to give guest lectures. The best way to make sure that you know what is expected from you is to talk to the Professor responsible for the class, preferably *before* the beginning of the quarter. Also, please note: **It is the responsibility of the Teaching Assistant to know and understand university policies.**

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HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE ES PROGRAM

The origins of the Environmental Studies Program at the University of California cannot be discussed without placing its emergence into a larger historical context. Because of political changes that took place during the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was increasing awareness of environmental issues and the need to establish an educational program in this area. Gregory Holmes, an ES major whose senior thesis in 1985 was entitled "Environmental Studies at UCSB: Where We Came From and Where We are Going," wrote:

The Environmental Studies Program at the University of California in Santa Barbara came into being during a crucial period in the history of the United States. The late sixties and early-seventies were troubled times across the nation, with large and often violent protests commonplace. Kent State and the People's Park Massacre at Berkeley were well-publicized examples of the unrest on college campuses at the time. Even the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California, in its Eden-like setting, had its share of turmoil:

The campus supported large demonstrations and protest marches over such issues as civil rights and the Vietnam War. A bomb placed in the Faculty Club killed the janitor in April of 1969, and within a year of that date the Isla Vista Branch of the Bank of America would burn, riot police and curfews would be placed in Isla Vista, and Kevin Moran would be shot on the steps of the newly rebuilt bank. In response to the "search for relevance" in the university educational experience the "New Free University" and "Isla Vista College" were formed. Articles on these, combined with the local issues of what Professor Rod Nash calls the "third wave" of the environmental movement, filled the campus newspaper near the end of the decade of the sixties" (Holmes 1985:2).

It was in this atmosphere that on February 18, 1969, just three weeks after the oil spill in the Santa Barbara Channel, a group of twenty-one professors met at the UCSB campus to explore the possibilities of establishing a program of environmental education. Their efforts ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Environmental Studies Program at UCSB in the Fall of 1970. Dr. Rod Nash, a member of the group of twenty-one and the first chairperson of the program, believed that Environmental Studies was different in 1970 for two main reasons: problem-orientation and an interdisciplinary approach. Professor Nash, who again assumed the chair in 1992, wrote:

Environmental Studies is an expression of the ideal that universities should assist society in solving its most serious problems. Even more than in 1970 we recognize today that defining a sustainable relationship to the environment must be the number one priority of any civilization interested in long-term survival. Education is a vital agent of cultural change. I have sometimes fantasized how different our world would be if every citizen had taken just Environmental Studies 11, 12, and 13*. I take hope from the fact that the thousands of students who have had these courses are out there making a difference in this planet's future.

Presently, about 1400 students take ES classes. The program has about 300 majors, 11 ladder faculty, 7-8 affiliates and 7-10 lecturers per year. There are five full-time staff members and two part-time peer counselors. The program hires about 25 TAs yearly from a wide variety of departments.

* In 1999-2000 ES 11, 12, and 13 was changed into ES 1, 2, and 3

CURRICULUM

The Environmental Studies curriculum is designed to give students the intellectual skills and scholarly background needed to understand interactions between humans and their environment. The program is multi-disciplinary and draws upon the resources of many related fields for the rigorous analysis necessary to solve environmental problems.

The Environmental Studies major prepares students for entry-level positions in a diverse number of fields, including urban and regional planning, environmental impact analysis, natural resource management, environmental education, conservation administration, energy policy, public interest lobbying, government and business. Many ES students use the major as a basis for graduate work.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES STUDENTS

Environmental Studies students are committed to their studies and interested in larger environmental and political issues. They tend to be idealistic and action-oriented. Their level of motivation is high and their enthusiasm makes them a delight to work with. Channeling the enthusiasm of the students to help them develop into scholars and well-informed environmentalists is part of your task when working as a TA for ES. Ann Munns, Teaching Assistant, said:

The level of enthusiasm of the students and their commitment to environmental issues is quite different from what you might have experienced in other classes. The real challenge as an ES TA is to channel students' enthusiasm in ways that will serve them well in their careers. This is especially important now, when the formula for bringing about effective change demands more than strong ideological and ethical conviction alone. It is in combination with fluent skills in environmental history, physical sciences, biology and ecology, and human behavioral sciences that students' passionate commitment will become the most effective force for change.

It is important to remember that education, not advocacy, is the mission of the university. Sections should not become political-action groups. What students do *with* the knowledge gained is, of course, their personal business.

Because of the high level of motivation of undergraduates taking ES classes, you should expect to be challenged by your students regularly. Also be prepared to work with people who already have extensive knowledge of environmental issues from other classes. Rather than be intimidated by this, you can successfully integrate the knowledge of your students into sections. Since most ES classes are interdisciplinary, you might want to create several opportunities in section for your students to help explain difficult concepts or to add the knowledge of their own disciplinary background to the discussion.

For instance, when discussing Native American religious beliefs in ES 1, you may provide an opportunity for an anthropology major to share her knowledge in this area. Or when talking about urbanization in ES 2, a student with a background in geography might be encouraged to contribute what he knows about this phenomenon. Although you are expected to be thoroughly prepared for running your sections, no TA can be an expert on every single issue discussed in class. Encouraging student participation in this respect will not only make your sections more interesting but also increase the self-respect of your students and their willingness to contribute to the discussion.

ES students share with students in other departments some general expectations as to what it means to be a good TA. In an informal survey done in ES 130B in the beginning of Spring Quarter of 1992, students were asked to list the most important qualities of a TA. At the top of the list were 1) knowledge of the subject matter, 2) the ability to explain concepts and ideas, and 3) the creation of an atmosphere in which students feel comfortable asking questions. Enthusiasm for the subject matter was another quality listed, especially in combination with the ability to transfer this enthusiasm to the students. Availability and approachability of the TA were seen as desirable as well.

Here are some responses to the question, "What do you see as the most important quality of a Teaching Assistant?"

"Enthusiasm for the subject matter and interest in helping students to also gain this enthusiasm."

"Organization and willingness to help the students understand the subject or content of the course".

"That he or she explains class materials clearly and summarizes in a more understandable way the difficult aspects of the class without expecting us to know everything".

"To be available for answering questions by appointment or during office hours".

"The ability to keep the discussion flowing with their knowledge of material that is relevant to the subject".

"Availability to students and a strong interest in the material of the course".

"To be able to get the class motivated in discussion and to increase the participation".

"Patience and the understanding that not everyone will understand everything right off."

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF ES TAs

General preparation for being a TA in the ES Program begins with reading this Training Manual and for **first time UCSB TAs** there is a Teaching Assistant Orientation sponsored by Instructional Development and held at the beginning of the year. Instructional Development is a valuable resource located in Kerr Hall and sponsoring the TA Development Program. TADP offers campus-wide training activities, serves as a resource for departmental training programs, provides instructional development opportunities for TAs, and works closely with other campus units on projects and policies concerning TAs. The TADP and Graduate Division host a campus-wide day-long orientation two days before classes begin in the fall for all first-time TAs. Nearly two-thirds of departments require their first-year TAs to attend this campus-wide event. The TADP also offers a videotape and consultation service, to both faculty and TAs, for the purposes of instructional improvement. Experienced TAs are trained by the TADP to facilitate the first-year TAs' viewing of their confidential classroom videotapes. Over half the academic departments (including the ES Program) require their TAs to be videotaped during the first year in which they serve as TAs.

In addition to campus-wide TA training opportunities, the Environmental Studies Program offers a yearlong training program specifically designed for Environmental Studies TAs. It involves an introductory seminar at the beginning of Fall Quarter and additional seminars throughout the year.

The best way to prepare yourself for working for a specific course is to start reading the course materials before the beginning of the quarter. In addition, you might want to talk to someone who worked for this class before. Preparation may also include reflection on your own philosophy of environmental issues and an assessment of your expertise in specific areas. And remember, enthusiasm for what is being taught, as well as the ability to convey this enthusiasm to the students, is a fundamental characteristic of a successful TA.

Teaching Assistant duties vary so widely from class to class that it is difficult to establish universal guidelines. Consequently, the Teaching Assistant should ask the course instructor or the head Teaching Assistant about responsibilities when questions arise. The following is a general outline of duties for most classes:

- Attend all course lectures and have good command of the reading material.
- In large classes with several TAs, weekly meetings are scheduled for the purpose of planning the following week's section and other course-related matters.
- Papers are required in some classes and are optional in others. The TA usually helps students choose topics and locate source materials. The TA also reads and grades papers.
- The TA is not responsible for assigning the ultimate course grades to students--this authority rests solely in the hands of the instructor. However, the TA is expected to handle most of the administrative tasks related to the assignment of course grades. These tasks may include grading exams, adding scores, entering course grades in computer files, and completing the bubble-sheet grade report forms at the end of the quarter.
- The TA is responsible for giving grade records to the course instructor when the course is finished. These should be handed over to the instructor or to the head TA in an orderly fashion (i.e. alphabetically organized by section).
- In a typical class, a TA is assigned three sections per week. Each has between 20 and 30 students. The purpose of sections is to give students the opportunity to discuss both lecture and

reading materials. Rather than present material of his or her own, the job of the TA is to clarify and integrate materials presented in the lectures and readings, and to help students relate them to larger issues beyond the classroom.

- TAs hold about two office hours each week. Evening hours are discouraged. Before exams, this minimum should be expanded. In addition, TAs need to let their students know (preferably during the first section meeting) that they are also available by appointment. Please let the main office know your office hours at the start of the quarter so they can be posted for student reference.
- Exams and papers to be returned to students should be handed out during section or your office hours whenever possible. Before the end of the quarter, make arrangements with your students where they can go to retrieve finals papers. It is important to make appropriate arrangements with the students and not rely on the office to hand them back.
- A critical responsibility of the TA is to give the professor or lecturer a clear, complete copy of any grades you assign at the end of the course. This includes an explanation of the system used to make grade differentials - e.g., an account of how you distinguished between a B- and a C+.
- ES requires TAs to be videotaped at least once while teaching a section and to sign up for a video consultation with the TA Training Program in Kerr Hall.
- ES TAs meet many interesting students in their sections. Try to have a good rapport with your students while at the same time being scrupulously fair and impartial. If you want to socialize with some of your students wait until the end of the quarter after all grades are assigned and your responsibilities as an ES TA are finished.
- Behave professionally. This includes being on time for lectures, sections, and office hours, as well as dressing appropriately for meetings with your students. Although no TA is expected to appear in class looking like a fashion model, you might want to exercise some judgement in what is proper or not. If nothing else, paying attention to the way you look will increase your own self-confidence and effectiveness.
- Administer course evaluations. TAs are evaluated quarterly using the same process as the course instructors. Evaluation form packets are made up by the Program Assistant and are passed out to instructors during Dead Week. The evaluations should be administered during Dead Week—generally the last twenty minutes or so of classtime. The TA should leave the room after selecting a student to pass out, collect and return to the home department the evaluations. TAs are not allowed in the same room as their students when being evaluated. TAs are not allowed to collect or return their own completed evaluations. **COMPLETED EVALUATION FORMS ARE NOT TO BE HANDLED BY THE PERSON BEING EVALUATED AT ANY TIME.** TAs are not allowed to devise their own or hand out evaluations forms that have not been approved by the university.
- *Compliance with all university policies and procedures is mandatory.*

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION

The following is university and departmental information you may not be aware of, but that you will be responsible for knowing and upholding.

- University policy prohibits students from having access to any other student's grades, so you should not post grades of tests, papers, etc.--even with the use of a number or pseudonym.
- TAs are provided with their own copies of reading materials used in the course. These are obtained from the course instructor.
- TAs are not authorized to use ES letterhead. In particular, TAs may not use ES stationery to request free copies of books from publishers, who insist that only faculty members have such rights.
- Although space is limited, the ES program attempts to provide its TAs with office space. You are encouraged to be present regularly and become an integral part of the program. Your physical presence will increase communication with fellow TAs as well as with faculty and staff.
- Supplies needed for teaching are acquired from the program office staff. Supplies are not for personal use.
- TAs may use the copier for midterms, finals, etc. Please ask the office staff for a copy code. For large copy jobs, plan ahead or talk to the office staff ahead of time.
- Each TA is responsible for obtaining course evaluations for every section. The evaluation forms are provided to Teaching Assistants by the Program staff. The TA generally brings the evaluation forms to section, briefly explains the evaluation process, and hands out forms to students. However, evaluations are collected and returned to the Environmental Studies office by a student volunteer. The TA should never handle completed forms.
- The completed evaluations are kept on file in the Program office and are available to faculty members both when they consider the reappointment of TAs and when they write letters of recommendation. The results are available to Teaching Assistants after final grades have been submitted.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE SECTIONS

Perhaps the most important part of your job as a TA is to conduct sections. TAs in ES are expected to use sections to provide students with an opportunity to get clarification, to ask questions about lectures and readings, and to discuss and critically evaluate course materials. On a more general level, sections assist in the development of critical thinking and promote discussion skills.

The following statements derive from an informal faculty survey done during the Summer of 1992 and summarize what ES professors expect their TAs to accomplish:

- Ensure that the students have a fundamental understanding of the main points in lectures and readings.
- Explore applications of the main points to real-world problems of the present and the future.
- Maintain consistent enthusiasm for the subject and convey this enthusiasm to the students.
- Be open to different approaches towards the subject matter and encourage multidisciplinary perspectives.
- Be a role model for the students and do not shy away from issues of ethics and moral behavior.
- Work independently and pay attention to detail.
- Exercise firmness and fairness in the execution of course policies.
- Treat the students with respect and care about their progress.

In the words of Professor Ed Keller:

It is important that TAs respect their students no matter where they are coming from. They need to be fair and treat their students with dignity. Also, a TA should not expect things from students that they can not do themselves. I believe in the effectiveness of positive reinforcement and confidence building rather than in intimidation. This is the best way to eventually push your students to their maximum.

And, exploring issues of ethics and moral behavior, Professor Mel Manalis said:

It is important that ES TAs are role models for ethics and moral behavior. Although these words are not often used nowadays, ethics and morality are of crucial importance in the study of the environment. For instance, deciding whether to use styrofoam or paper cups, or assessing whether you have enough knowledge to make such a decision, involves ethics and morals. Openly discussing things, such as cheating, with the students is another example as is using strategies to teach to student diversity and to encourage the inclusion of all students in the classroom process.

Here are some suggestions for meeting the above expectations and for making your discussion sections effective and successful:

- Preparation and organization are key factors in the success of your section. Be prepared to summarize readings and lectures and to help the students focus on the most important points. You might want to anticipate and prepare specific questions on readings and lectures.
- Create an atmosphere in which students feel comfortable asking questions and contributing to the discussion. State clearly that any question related to the course material is a valid one. Follow up by taking relevant questions and contributions seriously.
- Dignify student responses even if what they say is not "correct". Use phrases such as "That is a good suggestion, but not exactly the kind of approach suggested by the textbook," or "You are getting closer to the answer, but we might want to rephrase this a different way".
- Regularly check the level of student understanding of the course materials. One technique for doing this is to ask your section: "What did you understand the instructor (or the text) to be driving at in this or that instance?"
- Think of ways to make the class materials relevant to the daily life experience of the students. Prepare interesting examples to illustrate important points and solicit similar examples from the students.
- Involve the students actively in their own learning process as often as possible. For example, before summarizing a chapter from the textbook, ask the students what they think the most important points are. Or, before answering a question yourself, redirect this question to the class. When you do this, you should summarize and repeat the correct answer.
- Try to involve as many different people as possible in the discussion. If the discussion is dominated by a few people you might say "Let's hear some different voices." Or, you might ask a specific person if she has thoughts about a subject. When doing this, exercise tact; you do not want to embarrass your students or force them to speak unwillingly.
- Silence in the classroom is not something to fear. When asking a question, allow enough time for students to contemplate an answer. While waiting, you may want to look around the classroom encouragingly. After a while, rephrase the question, if needed. Resist the temptation to respond to silence by lecturing. But do not hesitate to briefly summarize a point from lecture or readings if the students are unclear about the concept.
- Formulate questions carefully. The more specific your question, the more likely you are to get an answer. Also, vary your level of questioning. Some students are more likely to answer factual questions while others feel challenged by answering questions that require the application of their knowledge to a new situation or to synthesize materials learned previously.
- Encourage students to bring in newspaper articles, reviews of films they saw or the account of an event they witnessed if they are related to the topic of the course. Use such materials to emphasize the relevance of class topics to the world around us.
- Never "wing" answers to student questions. Tell the students that you are not sure about the answer but will look it up and bring it in next week. Students will respect you for this. In fact, you might even use this opportunity to tell the students how you got your answer and inspire them to do their own research.

It is not unusual for a TA to get settled into a certain routine after a few weeks of teaching. Although this is not necessarily a bad thing, you might want to consider making your sections more lively and keeping your students on their toes by varying the format of the section and using different teaching techniques. Here are some suggestions:

- **VOTING:** Voting allows the TA to assess the level of student understanding of specific topics and encourages classroom participation. Voting can be done by means of a hand-vote or on paper (handed in anonymously if desired). Questions posed can vary from "Who thinks that overpopulation is the main problem facing this planet?" to "How many people would want me to go over the advantages of solar energy again?" Follow up on the answers. Calling on specific students to explain their choice might enable you to seek out students who need some encouragement to participate in section.
- **LAUNDRY LIST:** Start your section by asking students to suggest topics for discussion. Use this list to structure the first part of your section. You might refer topics that you are not prepared to discuss to the following week or to your office hours. However, deal with every item in some fashion so that all in the class feel that their concerns have been recognized.
- **BRAINSTORMING:** This approach is most appropriately used when discussing a problem that is complex and can have a range of solutions. Ask students to "spit out" suggestions for solving a specific problem, write them on the board and, when the list is completed, have specific individuals justify their choice. You might want to end this experiment by summarizing and prioritizing suggestions and by demonstrating the complexity of the issues at stake.
- **DO-IT-YOURSELF REVIEW SESSION:** Ask the class to formulate questions they expect to see on the exam. Write them on the board, discuss possible answers and give the students an idea how accurate their expectations are. This is also a good way to check student understanding and assess whether they focus on the right things.
- **BREAKING UP IN SMALL GROUPS:** Divide the class into groups of four or five people and give each group the same or a different task. Tasks might include a list of concepts to define or solving a specific problem. Afterwards, have a spokesperson share the results with the whole class.
- **ROLE-PLAYING:** Ask a group of volunteers to sit around the table in the front of the class and take on different roles. For instance, have a labor union representative, a commercial developer, an environmental activist, a city council member and the representative of a neighborhood organization discuss the future of a piece of land. This exercise can be an eye opener especially for those people who take positions opposite to their personal views. (In fact, you might assign roles so that people argue against their personal convictions.) Have the class evaluate the performance afterwards.

Last, but not least, you will want to get an idea of what your students expect from your section. You could either talk this over during the first meeting of your sections or ask the students at some point during the quarter to briefly evaluate how they think section is going and what they would like to change.

Here are some responses given by the students of ES 130B at the beginning of Spring Quarter of 1992 to the question "What do you want from section?."

The opportunity to discuss issues and information from class and readings and to organize this information.

An environment in which we all feel comfortable to ask questions, discuss issues, argue, laugh, and master the material of the course. Sections are best when students are free to speak their minds openly, and are praised for doing so, not judged by the statements that they make.

Open discussions about class material and other things pertaining to the environment.

A better understanding of readings and lectures through discussing and interacting.

To become comfortable with and interested in the topics discussed in the course.

Meaningful productive discussion of the issues we are studying, not just a review of lecture and reading material.

SPECIAL ASPECTS OF TEACHING IN ES

Being a Teaching Assistant for the Environmental Studies Program will be different from working as a TA in your own department. Although in most cases the workload is relatively heavy, it is very satisfying. It is exciting to work with enthusiastic students and also to learn more about the subject matter involved:

"The best part of working as a TA for the Environmental Studies Program is the students. They are highly motivated and really interested in the material."

- Barton Thompson, Teaching Assistant

"In ES 11, for instance, the workload for both students and TAs is moderate to heavy. But this is not really a burden because the students quickly see the value of the work. The TAs and the students end up learning together, partly because the TAs come from different disciplines and the subject matter is not their own".

- Gwendolyn Bell, Teaching Assistant

The following are other aspects to consider:

- You will be working with TAs whom you did not know before and who have a different disciplinary background.
- You will be using a multi-disciplinary approach in the classroom.
- You will be involved in teaching real-life issues of great concern to society today.

In larger introductory classes such as ES 1, 2, and 3 you will most likely work in a team. You will have group meetings for the same class and work together on things such as section preparation and the establishment of grading criteria for homework and tests.

ES TAs come from different departments and have varying disciplinary backgrounds including graduate students from Geography, Anthropology, History, Biology, Mechanical Engineering, Political Science, Education, and Geology. Most members of the team do not know each other prior to teaching together. That implies that, in a short period of time, a working relationship has to be established that is productive and pleasant. This is different from the situation in which you might work as a TA in your own department, where you probably work with people that you know already.

Learning to work with team members from different disciplines is critical to being an effective ES Teaching Assistant:

- It is advantageous for everyone to contribute in making his or her teamwork effectively. Working in a team of TAs who are unable to cooperate is not only unpleasant but can be counterproductive.
- Your fellow TAs are valuable sources of information. Some might have worked for the same class before; others have their own expertise in disciplines different from your own. Having a good working relationship will make it much easier to approach fellow TAs for advice and information.

- Being a good team player is a skill highly valued in the ES Program. When successful, the professor responsible for the class might consider this in hiring you for future TAships and in recommendations for other forms of employment.
- Your team members are your future colleagues. Broadening your professional contacts across disciplines at this campus is an important part of your networking strategies.

While being committed to making the TA teamwork well together is an excellent start, you might not always know how to establish a good working relationship and deal with conflict. Fisher and Ury (1991) suggest the following strategies:

- Separate the people from the problems you encounter
- Focus on interests, not positions
- Work together to create options that will satisfy all parties involved

When working in a group, you are dealing with human beings, not with abstract representatives of a certain discipline or political background. Human beings have emotions, values, and viewpoints. Different opinions or perceptions might lead to conflict, especially when we believe that the future of the planet hangs in the balance. However, when discussed openly and honestly, these differences can be turned into assets. For instance, the assessment of an economics graduate student of the value of alternative energy will, most likely, be different from that of an anthropologist. However, rather than fighting about who is right and who is wrong, you might want to focus on obtaining a better understanding of the viewpoint of your "opponent," which will ultimately help you to be a better teacher in an interdisciplinary setting.

Part of being able to learn the skill of cooperation and negotiation is to focus on getting the job done without allowing your ego (or that of someone else's) to stand in the way. Focus on what you can learn from each other rather than on games of power and hierarchy. Put some effort into finding solutions that are acceptable for the group as a whole. Respect other viewpoints and attempt to reach consensus rather than stubbornly pushing your own approach. Keep in mind that understanding does not necessarily imply agreement. Professor Marc McGinnes said:

TAs might want to attempt to center on an "unconditionally constructive" attitude. We are here to serve and give, not to condition. We need to be committed to the success of our joint venture and exercise the kind of self-discipline that allows us to do our work without being distracted by the differences among us. It is by paying attention to our relationship that we can act appropriately. One implication of the multi- and inter-disciplinary character of ES is that we need to strive for integration. We are responsible for each other's success. I am not doing as well if I am not helping my colleagues to be at their best. The ecological principle of interconnectedness is unifying and applies to the content of our program as well as to the relationship among TAs and between students.

The multi-disciplinary character of Environmental Studies classes also implies that you will be teaching materials with which you are not necessarily familiar. The key to functioning well in this context is thorough preparation of the course material. A class such as ES 2, for instance, covers a broad spectrum of materials and requires a lot of learning. However, there is nothing there that a good scientist cannot learn. It often boils down to applying your knowledge of, for example, chemistry or geography to ozone depletion, rather than to more traditional topics in your discipline. One thing that helps you to function effectively is that the larger introductory classes are very well orchestrated. It is often quite clear what needs to be done in section from week to week.

Another aspect of the interdisciplinary character of Environmental Studies has to do with the students. Especially in the larger introductory classes, students come from different disciplinary backgrounds. Not all students are prepared to perform well in this setting without extra help. In ES 2, for instance, a certain amount of mathematical skill is required. Some students experience a great deal of difficulty in this area. It is, unfortunately, still the case that especially female students are often discouraged from developing mathematical skills during their education. In fact, they might have developed a block against acquiring such knowledge. The TA needs to be aware of such problems and openly discuss them in the classroom and during TA meetings. You might also want to think of ways to accommodate the students in this respect and, if necessary, refer students to other campus services. For instance, Campus Learning Assistance Services (CLAS) offers tutorials on mathematical skills for students, free of charge.

Although these special aspects of teaching in ES may require some extra effort for the Teaching Assistant, bear in mind that your increased ability to work effectively in a multidisciplinary setting and to explore different approaches will benefit your own work and, ultimately, your career:

I prefer to work with Teaching Assistants who are willing to learn and open enough to try to understand things from different disciplinary perspectives. Not only will this be helpful in the work the TA does with the students, but also such qualities are also increasingly appreciated in the job market.

- Professor Susan Stonich

Another way in which the Environmental Studies Program differs from other departments is that it is more action-oriented. You might come from a discipline in which the main task of the scholar is seen as contributing to the accumulation of knowledge, rather than its application. In Environmental Studies, however, students are trained to apply their knowledge by helping solve environmental problems of concern to us all. This might require a different mindset for the TA, but in the long run it will be beneficial for you:

I think that it is very important for a TA to learn what the scope of the Environmental Studies Program is about and what its students do. In a way, this is a radical department and we believe in an action-oriented approach. There will always be people who see doing something practical is not as good as thinking ultimate theories. But we need to consider that environmental issues will be the most important ones in the nearby future. Learning how to apply your knowledge of the issues involved, is going to help you, no matter who you are and what you do.

- Professor Manny Kundu

TEACHING TO STUDENT DIVERSITY

The Environmental Studies Program is committed to encouraging students from historically underrepresented backgrounds to function successfully in the Program. Although there are no universal guidelines for responding to ethnic, gender and cultural diversity in the classroom, some general principles do apply:

- **BECOME AWARE OF BIASES AND STEREOTYPES YOU MIGHT HAVE.** Biases and stereotypes are often unconscious. Try to become aware of patterns of interaction that you encourage in the classroom. Do you undervalue comments made by non-native English speakers? Do you assume that every minority person in your section is enrolled under a special admissions program?
- **TREAT EACH STUDENT AS AN INDIVIDUAL, AND RESPECT EACH STUDENT FOR WHO SHE OR HE IS.** Do not project your experiences with, feelings about, or expectations of an entire group onto any one student.
- **BE AWARE OF YOUR LANGUAGE. TRY TO AVOID STATEMENTS, QUESTIONS, AND TERMINOLOGY THAT EXCLUDE OR DEMEAN CERTAIN GROUPS.** Avoid using "he" consistently when talking about human beings. Switch off with "she" or use "he or she". Vary your examples. For instance, don't continuously use people of color in poverty examples and omit them from examples of success and accomplishment.
- **AVOID ALLOWING SEXIST COMMENTS AND RACIAL SLURS TO GO BY UNNOTICED.** Create an atmosphere in which it is possible to openly discuss everyone's feelings towards the use of sexist language and racial stereotypes. Rather than encouraging antagonism in the classroom, use these situations to discuss larger issues concerning the inclusion of women and minorities in academia and elsewhere.
- **USE GENERAL TECHNIQUES FOR ENCOURAGING CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION OF ALL STUDENTS.** For instance, dignify all student comments in a discussion. Take the time to respond to what students say. Check to see whether you are responding more extensively to comments by non-minority students or males than to others. Also, allow students enough time to speak and discourage students from interrupting each other. Furthermore, various cultures have varying time sense. Be sure to provide enough "wait-time" after asking students a question.
- **BE HELPFUL BUT NOT TOO HELPFUL.** Respect students' ability to succeed and fail on their own. Sometimes TAs make seemingly helpful comments or offer special attention, which may imply that some people are not as competent as others.

TESTS AND GRADING

Responsibilities of ES TAs with respect to testing and grading vary from class to class. Format and content of the tests are largely determined by the professor. In most cases, however, tests are written in cooperation with TAs. Exam grading is done mostly by TAs and the work is often considerable. In the beginning of the quarter, you want to anticipate when extra time is needed for grading and plan your quarter accordingly in order to avoid time conflicts.

Although every exam is different, the following are some general rules to keep in mind for preparing, writing, administering, and grading tests:

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE TEST

The best way to prepare your students for tests is to give them accurate and complete information about what to expect. You might want to give them practice questions to discuss in section or present the grading criteria you will be using.

Finding a balance between using section for the development of critical thinking as well as for test preparation is quite a challenge for most TAs. Occasionally inserting remarks such as "The concept we just discussed is important for you to know well for the exam," or handing out review sheets and providing separate review sessions might be helpful. Avoid using section solely for test preparation.

WRITING THE TEST

When assisting the professor with writing test questions, focus on formulating questions that cover the most important points of the class. Test questions should be formulated on materials explicitly covered by textbooks, lectures, and section. Avoid test questions that ask for irrelevant details. All tests should be representative on the level of understanding that can be reasonably expected from the students.

ADMINISTERING THE TEST

Bring extra pencils, scantrons and/or bluebooks for those students who forget to bring the necessary tools. Prevent cheating by creating different test forms with a different order of questions. You might also want to spread students out over the room. State very explicitly to students, at the beginning, that cheating is not allowed and will be punished.

GRADING THE TEST

Avoid grading tests or papers before you have read a representative sample or at least mark your first ten or twenty grades in erasable pencil. After you have finished, recheck some of the ones you graded first to ensure that your grading standards are consistent.

Define grading criteria as accurately as possible and make them available to the students. Write comments on essay answers and papers so students understand how they can improve their performance on later tests. Avoid writing just negative comments; mention explicitly the good parts of their work as well.

When working in a team of TAs it is important to cooperate closely with your co-workers in agreeing on grading criteria that everyone will follow. You want to avoid disparity and the perception of unfairness that may result when one TA uses different grading criteria from the others.

EVALUATIONS & ESCI SCORES

At the end of every quarter each academic department evaluates their teaching staff. This includes all professors, lecturers and teaching assistants.

Evaluations are administered during dead week. Faculty and TAs are asked to schedule a convenient class time when the evaluations can take place. This is usually a twenty to thirty minute process. **The person being evaluated must not be in the room at the time the evaluations are taking place and must not handle their completed evaluations at any time.** Such instances will result in nullification of the evaluations and will not be used by the department.

The Program Assistant will prepare packets for each individual to be evaluated. You will pick up your packet before dead week in the main office. You will bring the packet to your class, ask a student or someone other than you to pass them out and to collect the completed evaluations and then return them to the ES Main Office. Under no circumstances should you handle the evaluations once you have asked that they be passed out.

Once completed evaluation packets are received by the main office, the bubble sheets are sent to Instructional Development for processing. The results are returned usually eight to nine weeks later to the home department. Meanwhile, written evaluations are copied to be given to the individual after final grades have been turned in.

All evaluations are approved by the department and under no circumstances are you to alter the survey in any way. Such evaluations will become void and will not be used by the university.

THE GUEST LECTURE

In upper division courses, you may be asked to deliver one or more guest lectures for the class. These lectures are an opportunity for you to present your research to a larger audience. The following are suggestions for preparing and delivering your lecture:

PREPARING YOUR LECTURE

- When asked to do a lecture for the class where you are a TA, the first thing to do is to decide how your topic fits into the course structure as a whole. Discuss this with the professor, and then make the connection explicit in the beginning of your lecture.
- Decide what the objectives of your lecture are. What should the students get out of your presentation? What are the main points that you want to emphasize?
- Avoid writing out your lecture word for word; you will sound stilted and boring. Make notes in outline form as a reference, but do not read from them constantly. Practice your lecture in front of a friend several times. This will make you feel more comfortable once you are in front of the class and will enable you to time yourself correctly.
- The attention span of the average adult is about twenty minutes. Organize your lecture with this in mind. You might want to break for questions and answers or other activities. Slides, overheads, and tapes also help extend the attention span of the students.
- You may want to start your lecture with a question, demonstration, or story that immediately grabs the attention of the students and sets the tone for an interesting and lively lecture. You could use a provocative statement, show a few dramatic slides or ask a challenging question.
- Visual aids such as slides and overheads, when used properly, will contribute to the clarity and liveliness of your presentation. Handouts with an overview of your lecture make it easier for students to follow your presentation and can also be used as a reminder and study guide afterwards.
- Make generous use of illustrations and stories that help explain the points you are making.
- Whenever possible, relate the subject matter at hand to the life experiences of the students.
- Don't be afraid to use humor during your presentation. Laughter creates a sense of well being among the students and will make them more receptive to the materials presented. However, avoid overdoing it; you do want to be taken seriously.

DELIVERING YOUR LECTURE

- Vary the tone of your voice, your body movements, and your facial expressions. Part of giving a lecture is being on stage, being an actor.
- Your major points should be repeated several times. Rephrase them or use different illustrations to allow for a large level of student understanding.

- Speak slowly and pause occasionally so that students have time to digest the information and take notes.
- Maintain frequent eye contact with the students. Keep their attention by addressing them as if you were talking to each individual rather than to an anonymous group.
- Avoid jargon and allow for sufficient time when introducing new concepts.
- Avoid annoying distractions such as repeatedly saying "um" or "OK", scratching your head, tapping on the microphone, etc.
- Be personable and relaxed. Convey your enthusiasm for the subject matter.
- Summarize the most important points at the end of your lecture and allow some time for questions.
- Remember that lectures always seem to take more time to deliver than you plan. Don't try to cover too much material. Have some "elastic" segments that you can lengthen or shorten. Keep track of time carefully.

SUPPORT FOR ES TAs

Occasionally you will run into a situation that you can not, or should not, handle alone. This includes practical things such as making an overhead for your section or being confronted with a troubled student. It is important for you to know where to go for assistance and support. Support available for TAs can come from a variety of campus offices. For ES TAs, the most important support comes from the ES Program Office. You might also work with Instructional Development and should be informed of other campus services that you can refer your students to.

ES OFFICE STAFF

The main office is located in Girvetz 2320. Office hours are from 8 am to 12 noon and from 1 pm to 4 pm, Monday through Friday. Telephone messages can be left at (805) 893-2968. The fax number of the department is (805) 893-8686. You may receive faxes at no cost. If you wish to send a fax, you will be charged according to where it is being sent. Check with the office for exact charges.

The Environmental Studies office staff is crucial to the functioning of the Program and important for you to get to know. You should introduce yourself to the different staff members at the beginning of the quarter and be informed about their responsibilities. Here is some basic information:

Program Assistant

Main Office, 2320 Girvetz Ext. 2968

Handles office assignments, classlists, supply purchasing, textbook orders, media equipment reservations and other class-related issues. The Program Assistant prepares course materials and can assist you in using the photocopier/making overheads.

Program Assistant/Assistant to the Chair

Main Office Ext. 2905

Handles room scheduling (including make-up sessions and exam review discussion sections), media equipment reservations, and the TA application process. Assists Chair in program related administration. If you need to see the Chair regarding an important program matter, please see her assistant first.

Financial Specialist

Main Office, 2320 Girvetz, Ext. 3715

Handles all TA hiring paperwork and field trips. If you have problem with your paycheck or are working with other departments on campus, you should speak to her.

Student Advising Officer / Internship Officer

2323 Girvetz, Ext. 3185

Helps students plan their major and is an important source of advice for ES students. He also handles grade changes and graduation matters as well as directs the Environmental Studies Internship Program. The ESP is the only academic department on campus that has developed their own internship program for their majors. It is beneficial for ES majors to take at least one internship during their undergraduate study. You should be aware of this program.

Peer Advisors

Girvetz 2325, Ext. 2283

Advise students on the ES major. You might refer students to the peer advisor office for information on the major, career advice, graduate school catalogs, etc.

FACULTY/TA MAILBOXES

You will have a mailbox assigned to you in the main office. This is an effective way for the faculty, staff and students to be able to communicate with you throughout the quarter. Please check your box regularly. You are not to leave materials in your box for students to pick up. Tests, labs or papers should be distributed in class and/or during your office hours and may not be left at the office or in an unsupervised pile. All academic work must be returned individually.

INSTRUCTOR DOOR CARDS

Students begin asking for you as soon as the quarter begins. It is important for the staff to know when and where to locate you. Please give your office hours, section times and email address to the main office as soon as possible. A door card displaying this information will be put outside your office in the ES department.

PHOTOCOPYING/OVERHEADS

If you should need assistance in making copies, whenever possible, leave all material to be photocopied with the office staff at least 24 hours (one full workday) prior to when it will be needed. Forty-eight hours is even better. When writing out what you need, give accurate instructions as to how many and when the job is needed. The staff knows that sometimes things come up unexpectedly, but please try not to be one of those people who is always rushing from one emergency to another.

EXAMS

Drafts of exams to be typed and/or copied must be turned in at least two days before the exam is to be given. The staff will then return a draft to you for correction and minor changes, if necessary. Please bear in mind that mid-term/final time is busy for everyone.

OFFICE OF INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Office of Instructional Development is located in Kerr Hall 1130 and offers a large number of innovative projects for improving the quality of education at UCSB. The TA Development Program is an important part of this operation and might be useful for you in several respects.

- All Teaching Assistants working for ES are strongly encouraged to be videotaped during their section at least once. The TA Training program provides consultants to watch this tape with you and to help you with suggestions for improvements. These consultations are confidential and focus on aspects you will want to work on, rather than on criticizing your performance. Faculty members do **not** have access to these tapes except, of course, if you give special permission. You can also bring in a blank tape and they will make a copy of the video for your own use.
- You are welcome to make an appointment to talk to one of the consultants about your teaching without being videotaped. Issues to discuss can range from brainstorming about how to make your sections more interesting to advice for delivering your first guest lecture.

- The program has a range of publications available for you to use. It also has videotapes on teaching-related issues for you to watch.
- Instructional Development has grants available for course development and TA training activities. You may want to drop by Kerr Hall and pick up information on what is available.

STUDENT REFERRALS

Occasionally a TA will be approached by a student who has personal problems or needs more extensive help with the development of skills such as reading or writing. Such students might be best served by referring them to one of the services available on this campus:

COUNSELING AND CAREER SERVICES

Building 599, x4411

This office is available for help with a wide variety of personal problems and concerns. Students can get individual counseling or work in groups on problems such as stress and anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

CAMPUS LEARNING ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Building 477, x4248

CLAS offers students help with the development of skills crucial to functioning successfully in academia. They offer a multitude of workshops on skills such as note taking, time management, reading, and writing research papers. When you discover that one of your students has problems with writing, you might want to refer him or her to their writing lab. Here, students receive assistance with things such as topic development, focus, clarity of expression and grammar. They can sign up in advance for individual appointments or just drop by. They can also be reached at.

TUTORIAL CENTER

Building 477, x3269

Tutors for most undergraduate classes are available at this center. This service is located in CLAS.

DISABLED STUDENTS

SAASB 1201, x2668.

The Special Services Program helps students with disabilities by providing interpreters, note takers, readers, and mobility assistance. They are also available for advice and referrals for students with disabilities.

OMBUDSMAN

SAASB 1207, x3285.

The ombudsman is available for resolving grievances students have after regular channels have been exhausted or when there seems to be evidence that adverse decisions are questionable.

OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

SAASB 2201, Ext. 4550, 4569

This office offers a variety of help and information to the student and the parents of students. For information on how to handle academic situations regarding incompletes, withdrawals, or finals, call this office and ask for directions. Also, if a student is sick and unable to make an important class or section, the parent or student can call this office and Student Life will contact the instructor. This office also houses the Campus Activities Center that oversees all student organizations on campus, including the Greeks fraternities and sororities.

If you ever have a question, don't hesitate to ask your professor or the ES office staff!

Welcome aboard and good luck!

REFERENCES

1. “Environmental Studies at UCSB: Where We Came From and Where We Are Going.” by Gregory Holmes. Senior Thesis submitted to the ES Program on March 15, 1985.
2. This section is partly based on a document titled “Teaching Assistant Guidelines.” written by Patricia Lambert for the Anthropology Department at UCSB.
3. These suggestions are a free adaptation of suggestions given by Linda R. Nelson in “Teaching Techniques: A Handbook for TAs at UCR.” The Graduate Division, University of California, Riverside, 1990.
4. “Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In.” by Roger Fisher and William Ury. New York: Penguin Books, 1981.
5. This section is partly taken from “Diversity and Complexity in the Classroom: Considerations of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender.” Office of Educational Development, UC Berkeley.