

SOCIOLOGY TEACHING ASSISTANT STATEMENT of POLICIES and PROCEDURES 2020-2021

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1) Contracts and Responsibilities:

- i) Graduate School Contract Dates: **8/17/2020-5/7/2021** (or the two weeks after the last day of classes for the semester in which you hold a TA position, as per the UKY Academic Calendar).
- ii) Titles: The title of "TA" is used to specify a funded graduate student with teaching responsibilities, which could be assisting one or more Primary Instructors (usually faculty members) or teaching a course independently (i.e., as the Primary Instructor). The Chair of the Department and the Director of Graduate Studies assign students to these roles each semester.
- iii) Workload: TAs are first and foremost **full-time graduate students**. You are expected to work an average of 20 hours per week, with the understanding that you might work less or more some weeks due to grading deadlines or other course activities. However, it is important that you do not deviate significantly from this average and that you are able to manage your student responsibilities without interference from your TA role. If at any point in the semester you find that you are working significantly more than 20 hours per week, please inform the Director of Graduate Studies as soon as possible so that we can resolve the situation and ensure that your employment situation is equitable and efficient. It is recommended that you keep a weekly log of the hours you spend working on various tasks.
- iv) Responsibilities:
 - (a) TAs who are teaching independently are the Primary Instructor for the course and are responsible for course design, implementation, grading, and student communication. The TA Coordinator is available to help Primary Instructors with all aspects of teaching and should be your first point of contact for questions and problems regarding teaching.
 - (b) TAs who are assisting Primary Instructors have a wide range of possible responsibilities depending on the course and the instructor, such as class preparation, classroom and laboratory teaching, grading assignments, email correspondence, Primary Instructor and student meetings, etc. (Please consult the "Policies Relative to Teaching and Research Assistants", Univ. Administrative Regulation [AR] 5.2, link below). TAs should meet with Primary Instructors before the beginning of the semester to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Please inform your Primary Instructor of any days/times during the week when you are not available for any TA-related matters because of your own schedule related to graduate seminars, proposals, Qualifying Exams, etc. (i.e., a day of the week when you are not in lecture, recitation, or office hours, and that you reserve for working only on matters related to your status as a graduate student).
 - (c) The role of TAs will vary in terms of pedagogy and producing course content. If you

have any concerns about your position, especially as you develop expertise about what is and is not working in your courses, be sure to contact your Primary Instructor and/or the TA Coordinator ASAP.

2) TA Mentoring and Evaluation:

- i) **Teaching Orientation:** Each semester the Department of Sociology will offer a Teaching Orientation organized by the TA coordinator. TAs must complete this orientation before they can serve as the primary instructor of a course. Ideally this orientation will be completed during the semester immediately prior to serving as a primary instructor. TAs are only required to complete this orientation once, but are encouraged to attend the orientation prior to each semester they will be teaching.
- ii) **Mentoring:** The TA Coordinator is available to serve as your mediator, liaison, and confidante regarding teaching policies and procedures. There are several other people within the department who can also provide guidance about teaching, namely the Primary Instructor for the course, other faculty who have taught the same course, your advisor, and the DGS. **When you contact anyone for advice about teaching by email please be sure to leave out specific information regarding students, including their name.**
- iii) **Resolving Conflicts:** Please remember that in your role as a TA you are representing the Department of Sociology and the University of Kentucky and you should aim to be a good ambassador for our community. Disagreements or misunderstandings with students should be handled calmly and professionally. The TA Coordinator and/or Primary Instructor are available to help you navigate difficult situations. Disagreements between TAs and their Primary Instructors should be brought to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies or the Chair of the Department so that we can resolve those matters as soon as possible.
- iv) **Evaluation:**
All TAs are required to have a two-part teaching evaluation completed each semester. The first part of this evaluation is the completion the Graduate School's in-class observation form. This form is meant to observe a TA's teaching as a snapshot at one point in time and will offer comments that highlight the strengths of the TA's performance, as well as offer suggests for improvement. The second part of the evaluation is completion of the TA Semester Evaluation form. This is a more summative assessment that evaluates the performance of a TA over the course of a semester.

The primary instructor of a course will complete the evaluation and observation of any assigned TAs. These forms should then be submitted to the TA Coordinator. TAs that are serving as a primary instructor will be evaluated by either the TA coordinator or another department faculty member assigned by the TA coordinator.

During the first three weeks of the semester the TA coordinator will circulate the teaching evaluation and observation forms to graduate students that have a TA line for the semester. For graduate students serving as the primary instructor of a course, the TA coordinator will also assign a faculty observer at this time. After forms are circulated and evaluators are assigned, it is the TA's responsibility to contact their evaluator/observer as soon as possible to arrange for the observation and evaluation to be conducted. Evaluations and observations should be completed at least 2 weeks prior to the end of the semester to ensure enough time for the TA and evaluator to discuss the evaluation and

observation, sign the forms and submit them to the TA coordinator by the end of the semester. For the Graduate School's in-class observation form the faculty observer should sign as the "Class Observer" and the TA coordinator will sign the form as the TA supervisor.

Students should keep a copy of the completed and signed forms for their records and should submit copies along with their Degree Planning and Progress (DPPF) to the Director of Graduate Studies in the spring semester.

3) Office Resources:

- i) **Office Staff:** The Sociology Department Manager is Justin Conder (1515 Patterson Office Tower). The Department Manager carries numerous responsibilities and is not responsible for TA-related work issues. Please do not seek assistance from the Department Manager until you have consulted with the Primary Instructor of the course to which you are assigned, the TA Coordinator, a fellow TA, your Faculty Mentor, the DGS, or relevant UKY resources regarding policies and procedures.
- ii) **Copying and printing:** Please consult with the Primary Instructor and/or Justin Conder for details on how to duplicate *any course-related materials*, including student papers or other assignments, especially in large quantities. You will be provided with a code for the department copy machine for teaching-related needs. It is not appropriate for Primary Instructors to expect or ask TAs to print any course-related materials on campus printers (including in the Graduate Student Computer Lounge) or use their personal printers, unless a TA agrees to do so. Be sure to make explicit arrangements with your Primary Instructor at the start of each semester, keeping documentation thereof.

4) Working with Students:

- i) **Student Privacy and FERPA:** The University, College of A&S, Graduate School, and Sociology Department take student privacy and the protection of education records very seriously. *It is your responsibility as a Primary Instructor or TA to ensure that you understand and comply with all aspects of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).* Please review FERPA regulations (link provided below) and ask the TA Coordinator if you have any questions. Avoid discussing grades or student work in detail via email (including with UKY staff in Athletics or other departments where students have signed a disclosure waiver). Do not leave students' assignments (graded or not) outside of your office, or post students' grades using first or last names or Student ID#s as an identifying marker. If you receive a request for information about students' performance in class (for example from someone in Athletics who is monitoring student academic status, or other similar university staff) be sure to clarify that the student has signed the necessary waiver of disclosure before you share any specific information. If students sign a disclosure waiver with one unit on campus you can only share information with them, not any other University units or individuals, until you obtain proof of specific signed waivers. This absolutely includes any family members, friends, or other faculty. If you are a TA for a Primary Instructor, always forward requests for information on student grades or overall performance to the Primary Instructor. If you have any questions about complying with FERPA (including the use of shared TA offices in relation to student assignments) please consult the TA Coordinator before responding or providing information about students' in-class work, assignments, attendance, etc. You must also ensure that students have privacy during office hours. However, do not close your office

- door. Instead, make sure that no one is hovering outside your doorway and/or leave the door at least halfway open.
- ii) The Syllabus is a Contract: It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with all University Senate and Ombudsman policies regarding course syllabi (http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForFaculty_CourseSyllabus.php).
 - iii) Student, Faculty, and TA Classroom Decorum: Regardless of whether you are a Primary Instructor or an assistant to one, it is your responsibility to set the tone for respectful and civil discussion in ways that encourage and teach students to express their diverse opinions without judging or offending others. If you have any concerns about how students are treating one another and/or treating you in the classroom or office hours, and you are unsure how to address the situation, please contact the Primary Instructor and/or the TA Coordinator ASAP (again, avoid including student-specific details in email correspondence). You should also familiarize yourself with anti-discrimination laws relevant to education, including University and Departmental Diversity statements, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (links below).
 - iv) Academic Integrity: All University instructors are required to follow university policy regarding academic offenses. **Should you encounter an academic offense or suspected offense, be sure to talk with the TA Coordinator or the Primary Instructor immediately prior to grading the assignment, prior to contacting the student, and prior to posting a grade.** The Department Chair will be responsible for determining whether or not there is sufficient evidence to pursue the case, contacting the student, and proceeding according to university policy from there. If you are the Primary Instructor, contact the TA Coordinator immediately prior to grading the assignment, contacting the student, or posting a grade and we will consult with the Chair, as per University policy. Some indicators of plagiarism include differences in sentence structure and writing style within the same assignment (or between assignments), different font styles and colors, ambiguity or inconsistency between sources cited and those in the bibliography, etc. You should also be aware of websites that provide students with pre-written essays for a fee. These include Adventures in Cheating, Essay World, Free Essay Network, and Top 100 Essay Sites.
 - (a) UKY Academic Offence Policy for faculty
http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForFaculty_AcademicOffenses.php
 - (b) UKY Academic Offense Policy information for students
http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForStudents_AcademicIntegrity.php
 - (c) UKY Office of Academic Ombud Services provides a PDF titled "Plagiarism: What is it"? I suggest that you make this link available on syllabi, assignment handouts, and Canvas. If you are not the Primary Instructor talk with students about using class time in the first week and when discussing the first assignment to show them the document and discuss its primary points.
<http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/Plagiarism.pdf>

5) Important Websites (University-Specific and More General):

UKY Graduate School Information on Teaching and Research Assistantships <http://gradschool.uky.edu/assistantships>

UKY Policies Relative to Teaching and Research Assistants: <http://www.uky.edu/regs/files/ar/ar5-2.pdf>

UKY Center for the Enhancement of learning and Teaching (CELT) <http://www.uky.edu/celt/> (be sure to join the listserv for workshop and other resource/event announcements)

UKY Learning Management Systems
<http://www.uky.edu/canvas/>

UKY Academic Communication Tool (ACT) Alert Management System (formerly Early Alert System) <http://www.uky.edu/studentacademicsupport/ACT-alert>

UKY Academic Calendars <http://www.uky.edu/registrar/content/academic-calendar>

UKY Office of Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity (OIIEEO)
<http://www.uky.edu/EVPFA/EEO/index.html>

UKY OIIEEO Explanation of Relevant Terms and Laws:
http://www.uky.edu/EVPFA/EEO/terms_laws.html

UKY Disability Resource Center (DRC):
<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/>

UKY Office of Institutional Diversity:
<http://www.uky.edu/diversity/>

UKY Martin Luther King Center:
<http://www.uky.edu/mlkc/>

UKY Office of LGBTQ Resources:
<http://www.uky.edu/lgbtq/>

UKY Violence Intervention and Prevention Center (VIP):
<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/VIPCenter/>

UKY Center for English as a Second Language (ESL): <https://esl.as.uky.edu/>

UKY Counseling Services:

<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Counseling/>

UKY Office of Academic Ombud Services:

<http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/>

UKY on FERPA and Student Privacy:

<http://www.uky.edu/registrar/FERPA-privacy>

Title IX and (Sex) Discrimination (See also the UKY OIEEO Website)

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html

US DOE on FERPA

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

The Study (UKY's hub at Transformative Learning for help with writing, studying for and taking exams, taking notes in class, etc. They have lots of great resources, including 1-page handouts, for students and faculty.

They will also come give presentations to your class) <https://www.uky.edu/thestudy/>

UKY Student and Academic Support <http://www.uky.edu/studentacademicsupport/>

UKY A & S Advising <http://www.as.uky.edu/advising>

UKY Graduate School <http://www.gradschool.uky.edu>

UKY Graduate School 20-Minute Mentor Commons: <http://gradschool.uky.edu/20-minute-mentor-commons>

UKY Institutional Research & Advanced Analytics:

<http://www.uky.edu/iraa/>

Faculty Support for TCE Process:

<http://www.uky.edu/eval/facultystaff-support>

Student Support for TCE Process:

<http://www.uky.edu/eval/student-support>

The Graduate School also provides an excellent list of internal and external websites related to teaching, including some of those listed above:

<http://gradschool.uky.edu/teaching-assistant-resources>