

Some Basic Guidelines for Teaching Fellows

The following are some general guidelines for TFs. Keep in mind that different instructors may have different expectations for what TF-led sections are supposed to accomplish and how those goals are supposed to be met. Your instructor should make those expectations clear. If they are not made clear, you should ask for clarification.

1. **Your most important responsibilities are to attend all lectures, take notes, and be prepared to go over the material with students in your sections, answering any questions they may still have, unpacking difficult concepts, offering examples and clarification, and stimulating discussion.** Of course this requires that you do all of the assigned readings.
2. **Some instructors may ask that in sections you go over readings that were assigned but not covered in depth in lectures.** But normally it is not a good idea to introduce new or additional information that does not come from class lectures or readings (for example, it is inappropriate to present in sections your own alternative interpretation of something the professor has introduced) and it is inappropriate to assign additional readings or other materials – unless you ask the professor before doing so. An exception to this is perhaps to bring in a short news article or a photograph or YouTube video **that illustrates a point that was made in lecture and stimulates discussion.**
3. Some professors will provide you with a specific set of discussion questions to go over in sections that accompany the lecture. If you feel you are having difficulties stimulating discussion, you should discuss this with the professor or/and with your fellow TFs.
4. **Most instructors appreciate your technical assistance.** Helping with power point set up and making certain that the system is on line and working allows the professor the time to interact with students before class and to field questions – the same goes for helping the instructor shut the computer system down, wrapping up cords, etc. Having the Media folks on speed dial is especially helpful. Picking up and returning films from Krasker is also expected.
5. **Most instructors also appreciate classroom assistance** for the same reason – that is, it allows the professor time to interact with students who come up before or after lecture. Rewinding a film, making certain that the attendance sheet circulates and that late students sign in, picking up the attendance sheet instead of leaving it on a desk, handing out and picking up stray handouts, are appreciated.
6. **During class time, TFs should act as examples to the undergraduates in the class.** The obvious is taking notes and paying attention – not looking at your phone or Facebook on your lap top. Keeping an eye on what's going on in the class is also helpful to the professor who may be concentrating on delivering his or her lecture. Is a particular student always late, or bored, or spending class time on their lap top or talking with a friend, etc.?

7. **TFs should restrict all written comments about students to official media**—BU's email system, blackboard, and/or faculty link. TFs should assume that any written comment about a student MIGHT eventually be seen by the student concerned. Comments on students and their work should not be posted on any public site or discussed where the conversation could be overheard by other students.
8. **Note that most classes with TFs are introductory or 200 level courses.** TFs should be cognizant of the fact that the material is introduced at an introductory level and that complex arguments may be to some extent simplified; exceptions may be glossed over. It is not the job of the TF to contradict the instructor either during lecture or in sections but to stick to the spirit of an introduction to the subject matter, recognizing that in higher level courses the exceptions and alternative interpretations will be taken up in more detail.
9. **Most instructors appreciate it if their TF checks in with them weekly.** We like to know how the class is going from your perspective. What materials do students seem to be struggling with? Should the lectures be slowed down or speeded up? Are the students doing the reading? Is there too much of it? What seems to be working and what doesn't seem to be going so well? Of course we prefer positive comments, but helpful suggestions for improvement are also welcome.
10. **TFs are responsible for meeting with their sections, arriving on time, and being prepared to lead discussion.** If you must be absent due to illness, it is your responsibility to alert the professor and contact the students. You must let the instructor know if you have to cancel a section for personal, professional, or other reasons.
11. **TFs are expected to hold weekly office hours,** alert students to any times they may have to be cancel their office hours, and set up alternative hours when necessary.
12. **Instructors will vary with regard to the tasks they will assign you.** These may include: proctoring, showing films, writing exam questions or quizzes, and grading exams and papers.
13. **The point of being a TF is to introduce you to the classroom and to teaching.** You should take advantage of the opportunity by asking questions and getting feedback from the instructor and from your fellow TFs. If you are interested in trying your hand at offering a lecture, you should discuss it with the instructor.