

# Teaching Assistants & Readers Handbook

2021-2022 Academic Year



COLUMBIA | SIPA

School of International and Public Affairs

[www.sipa.columbia.edu](http://www.sipa.columbia.edu)

## School of International and Public Affairs

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### Teaching Assistant and Reader Training (online) | September 7, 2021 | 10:00-12:00pm

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**10:00- 10:15 AM**

#### **Introduction and Welcome**

*Hazel May, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs*

- Welcome

*Hande Mutlu-Eren, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs*

- Overview of day
- TA/Reader roles and responsibilities

**10:15-10:45 AM**

#### **Teaching Tips and Working with Faculty**

*Emanuele Gerratana, Senior Lecturer in the Discipline of International and Public Affairs*

**10:45-10:55 AM**

#### **Getting Things Done**

*Andrew Johnson, Director of Curriculum and Faculty Affairs*

- TA office hours
- Room reservations
- Course evaluations
- TA access to CourseWorks

**10:55-11:10 AM**

#### **CourseWorks System**

*Andrew Corpuz, Learning Designer, Center for Teaching and Learning*

**11:10-12:00 PM**

#### **Lessons from the Field**

*Panel of former TAs and Readers*

Q&A

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### **IT Trainings (in-person)**

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30-minute session with SIPA IT during the following times:

**September 1, 2021: 9:30 – 10:00; 10:15 – 10:45; 11:00 – 11:30**

**September 3, 2021: 9:30 – 10:00; 10:15 – 10:45; 11:00 – 11:30**

**September 7, 2021: 12:30 – 1:00; 1:15 – 1:45; 3:00 – 3:30; 3:45 – 4:15**

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# Welcome!

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September 7, 2021

Dear Teaching Assistants and Readers:

Congratulations and welcome to your new positions as Teaching Assistants and Readers at the School of International and Public Affairs. You are extremely valuable to the process of learning at SIPA and I am grateful that you have joined our instructional community.

This handbook offers advice on everything from official SIPA policy to classroom management. We hope you find this guide helpful throughout your work as a Teaching Assistant and Reader.

I hope you find this experience academically enriching and intellectually challenging. I wish you every success as you embark upon this new endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hazel May".

Hazel May  
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

## Important Contacts

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### General TA Academic Issues/ SIPA Office of Academic Affairs (OAA):

Hande Mutlu-Eren, Assistant Dean, Academic Affairs  
Rm 1403 IAB | [hm2645@sipa.columbia.edu](mailto:hm2645@sipa.columbia.edu)

### TA Appointments/SIPA Office of Student Affairs (OSA):

Tan Nguyen, Assistant Dean, Student Affairs  
Rm 616 IAB | 212-854-6303 | [tn2102@columbia.edu](mailto:tn2102@columbia.edu)

### CourseWorks:

Andrew Corpuz, Learning Designer, Center for Teaching and Learning  
505 Butler Library | 212 853-0651 | [abc2188@columbia.edu](mailto:abc2188@columbia.edu)

### A/V Equipment:

SIPA IT Help Desk | 212-854-0112 | [sipaav@columbia.edu](mailto:sipaav@columbia.edu)

### Library Reserves:

Lehman Library Access/Reserves  
Rm 300 IAB | 212-854-3547 | [lehman\\_reserves@library.columbia.edu](mailto:lehman_reserves@library.columbia.edu)

### Office Space/Photocopying:

Karine Lafargue | Rm 1323 IAB | 212-854-3239 | [kl2059@columbia.edu](mailto:kl2059@columbia.edu)  
General questions: Rita Agyiri | Room 1314B IAB | 212-854-5756 | [ra2716@columbia.edu](mailto:ra2716@columbia.edu)

### Paychecks:

SIPA Human Resources | Rm 408 IAB | [sipahr@sipa.columbia.edu](mailto:sipahr@sipa.columbia.edu) |

### Classrooms:

For ad hoc room reservations (i.e. review sessions), request at <https://www.sipa.columbia.edu/students/room-reservations>. Five days' notice is required for classroom reservation requests. Please plan accordingly. Classroom reservation requests cannot be submitted until after the second week of classes.

For semester-long recitation/lab scheduling, contact SIPA Academic Affairs at [sipa\\_academicaffairs@sipa.columbia.edu](mailto:sipa_academicaffairs@sipa.columbia.edu).

## Introduction

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This handbook is designed to facilitate your transition to your new role as Teaching Assistant or Reader. The handbook outlines functional tasks you will find necessary to your role as logistics manager over the course of the semester. These procedures include items such as how to reserve classrooms for review sessions, how to make photocopies for class, and how to reserve library books.

Should you need advice in handling student concerns or leading discussion sections, etc., you should first contact your professor. Your professor will be an invaluable resource when assessing your own work in the classroom or managing students in the classroom. You should get in contact with your professor as soon as possible before the semester begins, so he or she can relay information to you regarding the first day of class, and his or her expectations for you for the rest of the semester.

## SIPA Student Officers' Responsibilities & Limitations

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Student officers of instruction are contractually bound to perform some specific activities but may also be asked to do a variety of other projects for the course instructor. Most student officers of instruction understand that when they take on a paid semi-professional position at SIPA, there will be certain requirements and contractual limitations. There is the advantage of tuition relief, but also the reality of a heavy workload around exam time. The information below is a guide that pertains to the general (and exceptional) activities of student officers of instruction.

**There are three types of SIPA student officer of instruction:**

Teaching Assistants (TAs)	Readers	Student Assistants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Work up to 20 hours per week.</li><li>○ Provide administrative support (i.e. photocopying, posting on CourseWorks, placing course material on reserve, requesting AV, etc.)</li><li>○ Hold office hours and lead recitations.</li><li>○ Assist with grading.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Work up to 15 hours per week.</li><li>○ Provide administrative support (i.e. photocopying, posting on CourseWorks, placing course materials on reserve, requesting AV, etc.)</li><li>○ Hold office hours. <u>DO NOT</u> lead recitations.</li><li>○ Assist with grading.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Work on average 10-12 hours per week.</li><li>○ Provide administrative support (i.e. photocopying, posting on CourseWorks, placing course material on reserve, requesting AV, etc.)</li><li>○ <u>DO NOT</u> conduct instructional duties (i.e. grading, leading recitations, holding office hours, etc.)</li></ul>

### **SIPA Policy defines responsibilities of student officers of instruction and MUST BE FOLLOWED:**

- Time commitment limitations must be respected.
- Although other student officers' responsibilities may vary, only someone with the formal designation of a SIPA TA can lead recitations or hold discussion sessions.
- TAs or Readers can assist in grading with an answer key but cannot grade essay questions open to interpretation.
- TAs or Readers can proofread, and post problems sets on the web, but cannot be held responsible for the creation of materials for the website.

### **TAs, Readers, and Student Assistants are STUDENTS:**

- TAs, Readers and Student Assistants have their own coursework, classes to attend, and a job search to conduct in the spring. Professors are aware of students' time constraints generally, but not on an individual basis. Each student officer should assume the responsibility of discussing important dates in his/her own calendar with the Course Instructor well in advance of those dates.
- TAs and Readers can hold open office hours for at least two hours every week. Office hours should be scheduled at a time other than those of the Course Instructor to enhance benefit to students.
- Some professors ask student officers to create answer keys for problem sets or exams. This practice is acceptable; however, professors must check the results carefully and should always be aware of the time commitment of the TA or Reader in question.

### **Communication is KEY:**

- Course Instructors must provide student officers with syllabi and reading lists to post on CourseWorks one month before the course begins.
- TAs and Readers should meet with the Course Instructor regularly during the semester to discuss instructional strategies and class progress.
- TAs and Readers should not discuss student performance or grades in open areas or with other students.
- The first step in resolving any individual student problem should be the TA or Readers consulting with the Course Instructor.

### **Forewarned is good practice:**

- Student officers should have early distribution of materials from Course Instructors to avoid last minute preparation for class.
- All photocopy jobs must be pre-approved by the OAA Academic Department Administrator staff (Rm 1314B). Large jobs can be printed either at Village Copier or at CU Print Services in the Rm 106 Journalism building. This process may take up to four days for large jobs. Student officers should never use their own funds to pay for copies at the request of the Course Instructor, because they may not be reimbursed.

- TAs and Course Instructors should agree well in advance on a list of approved TA substitutes in the case of emergency or illness.

**In accordance with the rules above...**

**SIPA Student Officers of Instruction CAN:**

- Assist with A/V needs in accordance with the rules of the IT Department.
- Keep course records of grades and attendance.
- Respond to student emails (though ultimate responsibility rests with the Course Instructor)
- Prepare and conduct recitations on topic sessions (TAs only).
- Have photocopies made for course materials.
- Assist with course-pack preparation.
- Place course materials on reserve.

**SIPA Student Officers of Instruction CANNOT:**

- Handle grade appeals.
- Work holidays or regularly on weekends (except student program assistants working in the SIPA computer labs).
- Sign timesheets for student workers.
- Assist instructors with personal tasks.

## **Section I: Office of Academic Affairs (OAA)**

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**13th & 14th Floor IAB | Hours: Monday through Friday, 9 AM - 5 PM**

OAA provides the following support: TAs can process small photocopy jobs, gain approval for photocopy jobs of up to 200 pages, sign up for available office space, and obtain assistance in ordering desk copies of books. OAA will also order chalk and erasers.

### **TA and Reader Office Hours**

SIPA TAs and Readers are required to keep at least two hours per week available to students in their section. Please be considerate when choosing the hours so that students may be able to see you easily. TA office hours should be scheduled at a different time than the instructor's office hours to maximize the benefit to students.

We recommend that you offer your office hours in the study areas of the Lehman Library, remotely via Zoom, or at a local coffee shop. Limited office space is available after adjunct faculty members have signed up for office hours. TAs can email [sipa\\_academicaffairs@sipa.columbia.edu](mailto:sipa_academicaffairs@sipa.columbia.edu) to inquire about availability after the second week of classes.



## **Photocopying Course Materials**

The staff in OAA will make copies for you within 24 hours if the job is less than 200 impressions total, AND if for some reason you are not able to make these copies yourself (this option is not available in fall as staff works remotely, but may be available in spring). All larger jobs must be authorized with a signature by Rita Agyiri or Karine Lafargue in the OAA office (Rm 1323) and processed by Print Service (Rm 106) in the Journalism building or by Village Copier on Amsterdam Avenue. Any large job requires at least 48 hours advance approval prior to the date when the copies are needed. Try to anticipate the professor's needs well in advance of these deadlines. *Please do not incur your own expenses--even at the professor's request--as you may not be reimbursed.* Full copies of copyrighted materials cannot be reproduced in OAA or at Village Copier or Print Services.

## **Ordering Course Books and Desk Copies**

Each course instructor will order the books for the course online with the Columbia bookstore. It is a good idea to continually check with the bookstore and keep the instructor informed as to whether the correct amount has arrived. To obtain desk copies for the instructor or TA, you can contact the textbook publisher directly. If the publisher requires departmental confirmation, please contact Rita Agyiri or Karine Lafargue in OAA at 212-854-3213 or 212-854-3239.

## **Section II: The Library**

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### **3<sup>rd</sup> Floor IAB**

#### **Placing Books on Reserve**

Placing books and other library-ready materials on reserve can be done either electronically through Library Web or in person at the Lehman Library reserve desk on the third floor of the International Affairs Building. TAs should become familiar with the submissions procedures, paying close attention to the copyright policy. Library policy and the online submission form can be found at:

<http://library.columbia.edu/find/reserves.html>.

#### **Taking Books out of the Library for a Professor**

In order to check books out of the library for a professor, you will need to obtain privileges as the Professor's Deputy Borrower. There are two methods for attaining deputy borrower status: a paper form requiring the professor's signature or the online method done by the professor on the

<http://library.columbia.edu/services/borrowing/faculty.html>.

## Section III: SIPA IT

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### 5<sup>th</sup> Floor IAB

#### Ordering A/V Equipment

SIPA E-rooms are equipped with an E-Podium or a Smartcart. Each of these includes a Dell computer, ceiling speakers, projection system, laptop connectivity, internet access and touch-controls. Use of the equipment must be scheduled through the SIPA AV website.

SIPA E-Room equipment must be requested at least two business days in advance by submitting the online form. If using your own laptops, there are connections for HDMI, mini-display port (Mac) and USB-C. Additional laptop adapters and presentation clickers may be checked out at the SIPA IT Helpdesk by leaving your CUID.

Training for E-Room AV Equipment is required for anyone planning to use the equipment for a semester. After a training session, keys for opening the E-Podium/Smartcart will be loaned for the semester. For users who have used the SIPA E-room equipment previously, a key can be requested for the term without training. For more information, contact SIPA AV Services (email: [sipaav@columbia.edu](mailto:sipaav@columbia.edu); <https://sipa.columbia.edu/sipaav>).

#### Reserving the Computer Lab

For courses requiring use of the SIPA computer lab or to reserve the computer lab outside of your regularly scheduled class time, contact SIPA Academic Affairs ([sipa\\_academicaffairs@columbia.edu](mailto:sipa_academicaffairs@columbia.edu)) or submit a classroom reservation request form.

You must inform the SIPA Lab if you do not plan to use the lab during the scheduled hours so that the lab can be opened for students. TAs are responsible for making sure that there are only as many students as there are computers. No one is allowed to double-up at computer stations, sit on the floor, or use the extra chairs at the back of the room. Please ensure that class ends promptly in order to facilitate the timely start of next class.

## Section IV: The Dean's Offices

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### 14<sup>th</sup> Floor IAB | Hours: Monday through Friday, 9 AM - 5 PM

#### Classroom Reservations

To request a classroom outside of your normal course or lab/recitation time (e.g., to schedule midterm or final review session) , please submit an online room request (see below) at least five days in advance of the needed date via <https://sipa.columbia.edu/students/sipa-room-request-form>.

For questions regarding TA-led recitations/lab scheduling, please contact SIPA Academic Affairs ([sipa\\_academicaffairs@columbia.edu](mailto:sipa_academicaffairs@columbia.edu)).

**Please note that access to your regularly scheduled classroom will end on the last day of classes.** You will need to submit a room request form for any review sessions after this time.

## **CourseWorks**

Please contact SIPA Academic Affairs at [sipa\\_academicaffairs@columbia.edu](mailto:sipa_academicaffairs@columbia.edu) if you have access issues with your course site.

## **Course Evaluations**

Course evaluations are automated online through CourseWorks. Course evaluations usually run during the last week of classes and the first week of final exams. Although this is a busy time for students, the timing ensures that all course evaluations are completed before grades are posted (in addition, the Office of Academic Affairs ensures that instructors do not see course evaluations until they have submitted grades). An email with instructions on completing course evaluations will be sent to all students at the appropriate time.

Each evaluation includes a question and comments section for the TA's performance. If you would like a copy of the TA portion of your course's evaluation, please contact SIPA Academic Affairs ([sipa\\_academicaffairs@columbia.edu](mailto:sipa_academicaffairs@columbia.edu)) after the evaluation period has ended.

## **Paychecks**

If you do not sign up for direct deposit, your check will be distributed through SIPA Human Resources. Checks must be picked up with signature in person in room 408 IAB during the posted pick-up times.

## **Assignments, Final Exams and Papers**

Please note that graded assignments, exams and papers may not be left in public or open spaces for students to pick up. These assignments should be distributed in class or during instructor or TA office hours. If you are responsible for distributing graded final exams and/or papers, please make arrangements in the form of special office hours or have students provide you with stamped, self-addressed envelopes in which you can mail the materials after they have been graded. If students are not sent and/or do not request their exams or papers, the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) recommends faculty members keep the exams for at least 120 days and preferably for one year. As TA/Reader it is your responsibility to return all final papers and exams to the instructor of the course.

The day and time of most finals can be determined by checking the University's master schedule in SSOL (<http://registrar.columbia.edu/content/exams>) or the SIPA Bulletin (<http://bulletin.columbia.edu/sipa/registration/exams/>). Please note that OAA has asked faculty not to set the due date for final papers on the last day of class or during study days. Due dates should fall

during the first few days of the exam period. Blue books for exams are available in OAA during open office hours (9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday).

## **SIPA Grading Policy**

The grades submitted for core courses are required to have an average GPA between 3.2 and 3.4 with the goal being 3.3. The instructor will have further information on the grading policy, and TAs responsible for grading should coordinate with the instructor to ensure they understand the grading scale for the course. In addition, SIPA recommends (but does not require) that courses with enrollments over 35 have an average GPA between 3.2 and 3.4 with the goal being 3.3.

All Teaching Assistant and Reader ‘graders’ who are SIPA students may only grade exams from an answer key provided by the instructor. TAs can prepare answer keys, but these keys must be checked by the instructor before use. Peer grading of essay type questions is prohibited.

## **Academic Integrity Statement**

The statement below **must** appear on all syllabi. If it is not on the syllabus for your course, please mention this to the instructor.

*The School of International & Public Affairs does not tolerate cheating and/or plagiarism in any form. Those students who violate the Code of Academic & Professional Conduct will be subject to the Dean’s Disciplinary Procedures.*

*Please familiarize yourself with the proper methods of citation and attribution. The School provides some useful resources online; we strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with these various styles before conducting your research. Cut and paste the following link into your browser to view the Code of Academic & Professional Conduct and to access useful resources on citation and attribution: <http://bulletin.columbia.edu/sipa/academic-policies/>.*

*Violations of the Code of Academic & Professional Conduct should be reported to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.*

## **Useful URLs for Teaching Tips**

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**Columbia University - Center for Teaching and Learning:** <https://ctl.columbia.edu/resources/>

### **Resources on teaching through other universities:**

- Michigan University – Center for Research on Learning and Teaching: <https://crlt.umich.edu/resources/teaching-strategies>
- Stanford University – Teaching Commons: <https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/>
- Cornell University – Center for Teaching Innovation: <https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources>
- Vanderbilt University – Center for Teaching: <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-guides/>

## Best Practices for TAs/Readers

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School of International and Public Affairs

Adopted Spring 2016

### 1. *Statement of Integrity and Professionalism for all TAs/Readers*

TAs and Readers are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity and professionalism. SIPA has adopted the following statement, which is to be signed by all students accepting an assistantship and shared with all faculty supervisors:

*By accepting this assistantship, I agree that I will uphold the highest standards of integrity and professionalism, including but not limited to the following: I will treat any information about performance by individual students as confidential and not to be shared with anyone other than the professor and other members of the teaching team. I will exercise the utmost fairness in any grading conducted for the class. I will promptly inform the professor if there could be any possible "conflict of interest" or appearance of conflict of interest with a student; this could include, but is not limited to, roommates, capstone partners, friends, family or romantic partner (or former partner), as well as individuals with whom I might have had a serious argument or dispute. (TA/Reader does not have to tell the professor about the nature of the potential conflict of interest.)*

### 2. *Professors' Initial Meeting with TAs/Readers*

It is recommended that professors meet with their TAs/Readers in advance of classes to cover the following matters and anything else necessary to prepare for the course.

#### a. *Responsibilities, roles and expectations*

Professors should review the statement of integrity (above) with their TAs/Readers, and professors should clearly define roles and responsibilities of TAs/Readers, as well as their own role in the course.

#### b. *Confidentiality*

TAs/Readers should not engage in gossip or rumors about students or faculty.

If TAs/Readers receive material from students during the semester (e.g., problem sets, exams, papers, any other material with student's information), the TAs/Readers should return all documents no later than the end of the semester to the appropriate student or professor (according to guidelines established by the professor). TAs/Readers should NOT leave graded exams, blue books or relevant materials in a common area or in plain view, like immediately outside a professor's office or TAs/Readers' office or in a mailbox – unless these materials are in individual envelopes, sealed, and clearly labeled with the student's name. Alternatively,

students can pick-up their graded materials directly from TAs/Readers during office hours. Graded materials that have not been retrieved, should be returned to the professor.

If TAs/Readers use semi-public university computers (e.g., labs, libraries, etc.) to process scores, grades or any students' material, the TAs/Readers should delete any relevant files at the end of the session (including emptying the "recycle bin"). TAs/Readers must use their CU email account for any email exchanges with students.

### *c. Grading*

The professor should remind the TAs/Readers that the final responsibility for all grading rests with the professor. SIPA TAs/Readers should in no instance grade major essays or papers (PhD TAs may grade longer papers). If the professor provides clear guidance about expected answers, TAs/Readers may grade problem sets, exercises or short-answer exams or short memos. Short memos should be no more than three pages in length (preferably two pages) and worth no more than 20% of course grade.

Instructions for grading may be developed with the assistance of the TAs/Readers but are the final responsibility of the professor. These instructions should include specific point allocation for each element of a correct answer (or deductions for incorrect answers). Some professors distribute grading rubrics for specific exercises to students, either in advance of the exercise or when it is returned. It is recommended that the TAs/Readers and the instructor separately grade a sample memo or answer, and then discuss the expectations for that item and their respective grading of it. If the TA/Reader has any doubts about the answer key or grading rubric, point allocation or any other aspects of grading, she/he should contact the professor.

It is recommended that the professor consider instructing students to put their name or UNI on the back side of a separate page at the end of the exam or memo, so it is not visible to the grader until he/she finishes grading and looks for it.

One useful strategy to reduce any appearance or possibility of bias is to have students' exams graded by two TAs/Readers. This will only be feasible if a class has more than one TAs/Readers, and instructors will have to exercise judgment about whether this is the best way to use the time of the TAs/Readers, but it is a possibility to consider.

The professor should discuss the process for responding to students' concerns about grades. Best practice is to maintain an explicit policy that allows students to appeal to the professor for a re-grade if they have concerns about the grading by the TA/Reader.

### *d. Academic Integrity*

The professor should remind TAs/Readers that, in the event of suspected academic dishonesty, the TAs/Readers must immediately inform the professor. The professor will determine how to proceed, and the TA/Reader should not contact the student involved in such matters, unless requested to do so by the professor.

### 3. Information for Students about Grading

The professor should make clear to students in the syllabus and/or at the initial class session:

- the specific responsibilities of TAs/Readers;
- that the final responsibility for all grading rests with the professor;
- how grades are determined and the process to appeal grading by TAs/Readers.