Undergraduate Teaching Assistantship

Guidelines and Procedures

Department of Psychology, Sociology and Criminal Justice

In the weeks prior to each fall and spring semester, full-time administration and faculty of the department can select teaching assistants from a pool of highly qualified undergraduate applicants. Serving as a teaching assistant can provide undergraduate students with the opportunity to enrich their educational experience, to grow their knowledge of basic principles in their area of study in both depth and breadth, as well as add professional development and experience to their resumes and applications for graduate study programs. By working in this capacity teaching assistants gain experience in creating homework assignments, initiating class activities, presenting lecture material, managing attendance, providing office hours or tutor sessions and assisting with grading all while earning credits towards graduation. Work graded by a teaching assistant must be reviewed by faculty before being posted as final grades. Teaching assistants are not qualified to grade student work without the input and review of faculty.

Basic departmental guidelines

Full-time faculty/administration may select a teaching assistant (TA) for one of the courses they are teaching in a semester. Full time faculty teaching an ‘Intro’ course (CRJU 1101, PSYC 1101) may select an eligible student to serve as a TA for that course. Student eligibility has been defined in this document (below). Further, administration for the department and faculty will work together to determine if the position of a TA will be useful (for both student and faculty) or is warranted for courses other than an introductory course. For example, courses which have a significant Experiential Learning component, courses with large enrollment limits (60 or more), or courses where significant curricular redesign is underway could be considered for a teaching assistant. This will be done on a semester by semester basis. Guidelines for teaching assistants apply to courses taught hybrid and online as well. Teaching assistants may be selected any time prior to their starting semester, however faculty must have met with the selected teaching assistant and signed a contract agreement/training acknowledgement at least one week prior to starting classes. All documentation should be sent to the teaching assistant coordinator (currently Courtney Stavely courtney.stavely@mga.edu).

Faculty can only have one TA per semester and a TA can only work with one class per semester. This is to say that a TA is serving as an assistant for a specific class, not a specific faculty member. This is vital to the learning experience of the TA.

Teaching assistants will use the experience as one of their required upper-level electives. Teaching assistants can earn up to six credit hours towards their upper level electives (3 credits per semester) via the TA option. This limits the experiences to a maximum of two semesters per student. Requiring students to register for the teaching assistantship as an elective allows for accountability for both student and faculty. Students working as a TA will register for PSYC 3999 which is a Special Topics course and can be counted in the upper-level electives for any of the degree programs in our department.

Teaching assistants may be selected individually by a faculty member. Also, students interested in becoming a teaching assistant should approach faculty to inquire about possibilities. The intention of the teaching assistantship program is to provide teaching experience to our most highly-qualified students. Highly-qualified typically indicates a strong GPA, critical background knowledge in the area and significant motivation. This experience will help to improve the likelihood
that they will be accepted into their desired graduate programs. For this reason, students with goals for graduate school
should be given priority.

Teaching Assistant eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible to serve as a TA, students must meet the following criteria:

- Students must have finished all core requisite courses in areas through F.
- Students must have received an A for the course in which they wish to serve as a TA.
- Students must have completed a minimum of 30 hours in the degree area core course work which would place
at 90 hours or above in the degree process.
- Students must have scored an A or a B in all 3000-4000 level courses completed upon applying to be a teaching
assistant.
- Students must have strong interpersonal skills, must be open to learning from the mentor/mentee process
with faculty and must honor codes of confidentiality and professionalism as outlined in their signed
contract/training agreement.
- Students must be familiar with and adhere to FERPA guidelines/requirements at all times.

Faculty Guidelines

The process of using a TA should be one that is mutually beneficial. In this way, a faculty member has the opportunity to
serve as a mentor to a student who may one day serve as faculty in another university. This position also has the benefit
of an assistant for the faculty member. Faculty must work to provide continuous challenge and growth opportunities to
teaching assistants. Faculty are expected to meet with their TA on a weekly basis either in person or through digital
means (telephone conference, video chat and email) to ensure that any conflicts, challenges and questions can be
addressed and the TA has the opportunity to learn with the support and experience of faculty members. In many ways a
TA can help to lighten the load of faculty, but in other ways it is an added responsibility with its own time and effort
requirements.

Having a TA benefits faculty by assisting with grading, attendance, one-on-one student support and tutoring and
responding to student needs. Faculty with a TA also gain the opportunity to get formative feedback on current course
assignments, content delivery and so forth. Teaching assistants often have great insight into the ‘student experience’ as
well as fresh energy and interest to revamp assignments, run class activities and so forth. Teaching assistants may list
their email information for student contact but faculty should remind their students that although a TA is available to
assist, they are not a barrier to student and faculty communication and students should feel free to contact the faculty
member whenever necessary. Teaching assistants are not permitted to give their personal email or phone contact
information to students. Teaching assistants are also not permitted to meet with students off-campus for tutor sessions.
This is for the safety of the TA.

A Teaching Assistant may be to attend classes, monitor attendance, be familiar with the current text and assignments,
deliver a segment of lecture over a topic of interest to them, or provide learning materials for classes in an online
setting. Faculty should task their TA with creating at least one hands-on class activity, providing one lecture on all or part
of a chapter, and to create at least one assignment so that they have the opportunity to see how students react/respond
and what some of the challenges of teaching can be. Your TA will also able to assist in grading; However it is vital that all
work graded by a TA be reviewed by faculty before being posted as final grades. Teaching assistants are not qualified to
grade student work without the input and review of faculty. Teaching assistants will be given guidance on confidentiality
and professionalism and will be asked to sign a contract acknowledging their understanding and willingness to abide by
Middle Georgia and State University standards in this area.
Ultimately, any conflict or concern between the students and the TA should be addressed by faculty immediately. If faculty feel this issue is not fully resolved then the teaching assistantship coordinator or other administration should be included in the discussion and resolution process.

**Teaching Assistant Guidelines**

Being selected to be a teaching assistant (TA) is an acknowledgement of your significant academic accomplishment and should be considered with pride. By serving as a Teaching Assistant in the department of Psychology, Sociology and Criminal Justice you are agreeing to serve with professionalism. This includes dependability, confidentiality, fairness and kindness regarding the faculty and students you will be working with. By applying for this position you are stating that you have the time and energy to devote to the work that will be required. You will be counted on and the faculty you work with will need for you to serve in your role with a positive spirit, and a dependable, prompt working style and openness to guidance. If you are selected to serve as a teaching assistant it is because the faculty who chose you felt that you have the educational, professional and personal traits required to succeed in this capacity. You are working for upper-level elective credits and will receive a grade for your efforts. Prior to the start of the semester your faculty member will meet to identify their expectations and to provide you with training regarding their specific course and teaching style. You may be asked to perform any or all of the following:

- attend all classes
- monitor attendance
- read and be very familiar with all text/course material
- serve as added student contact for the course regarding questions about homework or course material
- provide tutor sessions to students for a maximum of 3 hours per week.
- assist in preliminary grading and reviewing student work
- creating assignments
- presenting material in lecture or online format
- creating and executing class activities
- meeting with your faculty member regularly to discuss concerns or questions
- immediately report any potential conflict or concern regarding students

Other duties may arise and may be negotiated between faculty and TA.

Teaching Assistants will also be required to write a short essay/paper and complete a survey regarding their TA experience. The paper will be considered your ‘final exam’ and will be reviewed and graded by the professor/instructor who worked with the student. This paper will be due by the last day of lecture/class in the course that you are working as a TA. This assignment will ask you to do some minor research regarding teaching in higher education, reflect on your experience as a teaching assistant and give some insight as to your own teaching philosophy based on your experience as a TA. You will be given a rubric and guidelines for this assignment by midterm of the semester you are working in.

Students may serve as a TA a maximum of two semesters. Students may work with the same faculty in the same course or they may choose to try to gain experience with a different faculty member or a different course if they serve a second semester. No more than 6 credit hours can be earned as a TA. All credits earned will be applied to your upper-level electives. Students selected to serve as a TA can meet with the teaching assistantship coordinator to get registered for PSYC 3999 elective.

Teaching assistants are not permitted to give their personal email or phone contact information to students. Teaching assistants are also not permitted to meet with students off-campus for tutor sessions. This is for the safety of the TA.
A teaching assistant will be assigned a grade for this course just as they would for any other course. This grade is based on faculty members’ formal assessment as well as the final paper required for position which will be assessed by coordinating administration. Faculty working with TA will need to communicate this information to the TA coordinator (Courtney Stavely). A TA may be released from their duties at any time if faculty feel that they are a liability to the academic security and integrity of their classroom. This includes conflicts with students, refusing guidance, breaking confidentiality of student’s course work or grades or any other infraction. Releasing a TA from their position will be a decision made by administration within the department and faculty members involved.

**Registration for Teaching Assistants**

This is a 3 credit hour course which can be used as an upper-level elective for students who are selected to be Teaching Assistants. Students can receive a maximum of 6 credit hours towards their upper-level electives as a Teaching Assistant and/or Peer Tutor.

Students will register for PSYC 3999. Registration for these courses is done through administration based on communication with the students and instructors involved.

*The Department of Psychology, Sociology and Criminal Justice reserve the right to dismiss a student from service and apply the grade of F, WF or I as is deemed necessary. In situations of this nature the professor involved would meet with the Chair and the Coordinator to discuss the situation and together they will decide how to proceed. The Student Affairs office may be involved as well. Students are expected to behave in a way that is consistent with the Middle Georgia Student Handbook.*

By signing below you are acknowledging that you have read and agree to the guidelines mentioned above.

________________________________________
student signature and date

________________________________________
faculty member signature and date

________________________________________
administration signature and date

*copy of this document should be kept in student’s permanent file within the department.*