

Welcome New CISC TAs!

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* New to being a TA, though not new to UD CIS Dept.

Introductions

- **Who am I?**
 - **Phill Conrad**
 - Asst. Professor (CNTT), CIS Dept UD (2003-present)
 - Instructor/Asst. Professor, Temple Univ (1998-2003)
 - Lecturer, UD CIS Dept (1996-1998)
 - **Current Position: "Continuing Non-Tenure Track" Asst. Professor**
 - Continuing: career-oriented, longer contracts, possibility of promotion
 - Non-Tenure: focus: undergraduate teaching/advising, rather than research
 - **Teaching emphasis:**
 - C/C++ programming courses (CISC105/CISC181/CISC220)
 - Web development (CISC103, CISC474)
 - **PhD student in UD CIS 1992-2000 (completed Dec 2000).**
 - **Interests outside Computer Science:**
 - Music, Crafts, Meditation, Hiking/Backpacking, Swimming, Biking
- **Who are you?**
 - Tell us your name, something about yourself
 - Practice using your "teacher voice".

On being a TA...

- Not only a way to make money,
but an *apprenticeship* in teaching.
- Important member of the teaching staff
- Practice in juggling teaching with
research/scholarship responsibilities.

Our purpose today

- Talk a bit about being a TA
- Answer your questions

The job of a CIS TA (10 or 20 hrs/week)

- Assist Instructor in teaching the course
- Typical duties:
 - Holding labs (for courses with labs: 101, 103, 105, 106, 181, 280)
 - Helping students during office hours
 - 2 hours per week is typical
 - You should also be available by appointment
 - Answering student email
 - Grading
 - Weekly planning meeting
- Less typical, but sometimes occur:
 - Attending course lectures
 - Developing assignments and course materials
 - Guest lecture for professor when away
 - Assist with proctoring final exam
 - Other duties as determined by instructor

For TA work,
your instructor is your supervisor

- She/he will supervise your 20 hours per week (10 if half/time)
- If you teach two courses, you owe 10 hrs/week to each instructor's assigned duties.
- Difficulties seldom arise in working with faculty supervisors, but if they do, to whom can you turn?
 - Unofficially:
 - your advisor, or any other faculty member you trust
 - Officially:
 - graduate committee chair
 - department chair

Office Hours

- You should post your hours on your web site
 - put in public_html file on Composers account, or public_html file on eecis account.
 - (say a bit here about different computer systems...)
- Unless you are told otherwise:
 - 2 hours per week
 - in Pearson Hall
 - coordinate times with Linda Magner and your Instructor
 - Linda works in CIS Dept. Office.
- Avoid:
 - the scheduled lecture time
 - times when your instructor has office hours.

About labs

- Which courses have scheduled labs?
 - CISC101: MS office (2 hours)
 - CISC103: XHTML and JavaScript (2 hours)
 - CISC105: C Programming (CS1) (50 minutes)
 - CISC106: Matlab Programming (CS1 for Engg) (50 minutes)
 - CISC181: C++ Programming (CS2) (50 minutes)
 - CISC280: Scheme Programming (CS4) (50 minutes)
- Where are labs held?
 - CISC101: in PC labs in rooms throughout campus
 - CISC103: in a PC lab in basement of Memorial Hall (028)
 - The rest: Sun Ray lab (X Terminals using Gnome on Solaris) in Willard Hall 009B (Main Street, across from Trabant Garage, next to Deer Park)
- What about the other courses without labs?
 - Larger programming assignments, and you get assigned to two classes rather than one
 - So the workload balances out (sort of...)

Grading Assignments

- Rubric: rules for grading
- Ideally, your instructor gives you a general rubric, e.g.
 - 40 pts for correctness of algorithm
 - 40 pts for style/formatting of code
 - 20 pts for neatness of printed output
- Rubrics can be more or less detailed than that.
- Keep in mind:
 - usual paradigm for US undergrads:
 - start with 100%
 - apply deductions for specific reasons (defects)
 - if you make deductions, write down a specific reason
 - apply partial credit where it is appropriate.
- Develop your own detailed rubric as you go along
 - as you encounter errors, keep a log of how much you deduct for each defect; use same deduction when you encounter that again.

Example Rubrics

- <http://www.cis.udel.edu/~gibson>
- <http://www.cis.udel.edu/~gibson/181/grades>

More on grading...

- Keep instructor's grading scale in mind
 - Students will “give meaning” to your grade this way
- Typical:
 - 90-100% = A = Excellent
 - 80-89.9% = B = Good to Very Good
 - 70-79.9% = C = Fair to Satisfactory
 - 60-69.9% = D = Poor
 - below 60 = Failing
- Student challenges to grades
 - Have a procedure (and a deadline) (e.g. 2 weeks)
- Grade and return work promptly
 - Within 1 week of receiving it.
 - Communicate with your instructor if you get behind.

Academic Honesty

Already covered in University Orientation,
but to emphasize a few points specific to CIS

- Fortunately, most students don't cheat.
- However, because there are so many students, you are very likely to encounter at least one case each semester—sometimes more than one.
- Most common violation
 - Students copying code from one another
- Always involve the instructor
do NOT handle this yourself as a TA
- How to handle it... (next slide)

How to handle academic dishonesty

- Always involve the instructor—do NOT handle this yourself as a TA
- Your role:
 - Detect the “possible” dishonesty
 - don’t assume that you know what happened... there have been surprising cases!
 - Provide evidence to the instructor, and let the instructor handle it.
- Some helpful things to do:
 - Determine the grade the students *would have gotten* if you did *not* suspect dishonesty
 - Put the grade on the paper, but do NOT report it to the students.
 - Separately, email your concerns about the paper to the instructor. Or, you may circle things on the printouts, etc.
- Do NOT notify the students in any way---that will be the instructor’s job.
 - If students question you as to why there is no grade, or their paper hasn’t been returned say only the following.

(Repeat this over and over to them if they press you for more information)



“I had some questions about how to grade your paper, and I needed to consult with the instructor”

If you have further questions, you should contact the instructor directly

Still more on grading

- Submission of assignments
 - paper, directly to TA (pros and cons)
 - paper, via mailbox (can be problematic)
 - electronic, via email
 - electronic via WebCT
- DO NOT
 - have students bring papers to the CIS Office
 - have students ask secretaries to “time stamp” the papers.
- Returning grades
 - Public Posting by SSNs is *illegal*
 - not just against university policy, but in violation of US Federal Laws (FERPA Act)
 - Even "last four digits" is *illegal*
 - University is starting to enforce this strictly
 - use “secret codes” instead.
 - Don’t allow any codes that look like SSNs.
 - Electronic means (mygrade program, WebCT)

More on privacy...

- Don't discuss one student's grade in front of another (whether good or bad)
- Don't have students put SSNs on papers or in program comments (if they do, discourage them)
- Don't send SSNs through email.
- When returning papers, try to obscure the grade.
Some strategies:
 - Write it on page two, not on page one
 - Fold paper in half as you hand it back

Office Hour Skills

- Help students arrive at a solution by giving hints, but don't do the work for them.
- Try to always have a helpful attitude
 - can be challenging when students are asking you to “do their work for them”.
 - Let's see a couple of examples...

I could tell you the answer, but...

... I'd be cheating you out of an opportunity to learn.

- Let me show you instead how to work a similar problem...
- Let's think about how to break down the problem into smaller pieces....
- Let me suggest you read this section in the textbook again. If you still don't understand, bring your textbook with you, and we'll read through that part together and see what you still aren't getting.
- Let me suggest you look again at the web site, where I think that question is addressed.

A key point is "tone"... the same thing can be said in a "helpful" way or an "unhelpful" way...

Student emails

- an important part of your duties
- can be very helpful to students,
but can also be a **drain on your time**
- **set expectations** for turn around
 - (i.e. NOT necessarily immediate, even if it was last time)
- class email lists/bulletin boards as alternative
 - helps avoid many duplicate questions
- AVOID debugging programs via email
- **consider splitting account usage** to help time budgeting
 - e.g. composer account for student email,
CIS account for all other email (or use gmail account?)
 - allocate a fixed time slot per day to answering student emails.
- to avoid spam filters and aid in sorting,
suggest students put CISCxxx (course number) in subject line.

Problem students

- The grade grubber
 - always questions every little point you deduct
- The monopolizer
 - monopolizes your office hour time
- The hostile student
 - nothing you can do is right
- The overzealous fan
 - wants to follow you around everywhere

There are strategies/resources for dealing with these...

McKeachie's *Teaching Tips*

Faculty mentors...

Center for Teaching Effectiveness (cte.udel.edu)

Final Thoughts

- Email/Call/Visit your supervising professor as soon as possible.
- Exchange phone numbers/email
- Find out when your instructor wants to see you next.
- If you have further questions, feel free to email me: pconrad@udel.edu