Welcome New CISC TAs!

Aaron Archer-Waterman
James Atlas
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Frank A. Lee
Sara Sprenkle
Ke Li
Preethi Natarajan
Joe Provey
Marion Rich
Eric Schrag
Michael C. Smith
Mani Thomas
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Introductions

- Phill Conrad
  - Asst. Professor, CIS Dept UD (03-present)
  - Asst. Professor, Temple Univ (98-03)
  - Instructor, UD CIS Dept (96-98)
- Aaron Brown
  - Grad Student, CIS Dept UD (03-present)
  - TA for CISC105 and CISC181 (03-04)

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
- Finish by 11:30 so you can get lunch and be back by 1PM
  - Lunch is “on your own” (i.e. you are paying)
  - Some experienced students will be stopping by
  - If you like, they can:
    - show you affordable places to eat
    - help you get there and back by 1PM
    - talk some more with you about the dept. over lunch
  - you are also free to go your own way 11:30am-1pm.

The job of a TA (20 hrs/week)

- Assist Instructor in teaching the course
- Typical duties:
  - Holding labs (typically for CISC101, CISC105, CISC181 only)
  - 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.
- 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
  - when your instructor has office hours.

Holding labs

- Which courses have scheduled labs?
  - CISC101: Computer Literacy (2 hours)
  - CISC105: C Programming (CS1) 50 minutes
  - CISC181: C++ Programming (CS2) 50 minutes

101 labs held at PC labs in several buildings throughout campus

105 and 181 are held in Sun Ray labs (X Terminals with Gnome Desktop)
Willard Hall Education Building (Main Street, across from Garage, next to Deer Park)

- Courses without scheduled labs tend to have much larger programming assignments, so 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.

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 chalenges 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.

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
- Returning grades
  - Public Posting by SSNs is *illegal*
    - (not just against university policy, but in violation of US Federal Privacy Laws)
    - use “secret codes” instead.
    - Don’t allow all 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)

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

- very helpful, but can 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
- consider splitting account usage
  - e.g. composer account for student email,
    CIS account for all other email

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

Tentative Assignments

101: Computers and Information Systems (non-majors)
Marion Rich:
105: General Computer Science (C) (CS1)
Joseph E. Provey
Jessie Burger
181: Introduction to Computer Science (C++) (CS2)
James Atlas
220: Data Structures (C++)
Aaron A. Archer-Waterman
280: Program Development Techniques (Scheme)
Catalina Tudor

Tentative Assignments

320: Introduction to Algorithms
Mani Thomas
360: Computer Architecture
Eric Schrag
361: Operating Systems
Ke Li
437: Database Systems
Frank A. Lee
459: Networks and System Security
Eric Eckstrand
475: Object-oriented Software Engineering (capstone)
Xiao Feng Han
479: System Administration
Eric Schrag
640: Computer Graphics (graduate)
Mani Thomas