CIS 610 Teaching Effectiveness  
Fall 2021 Week 7

Agenda

Q/A with Experienced GE Panel

Break

Check in – what is happening/how to handle now/how to prevent

We will continue the discussion next week, with emphasis on challenging situations (it’s that time of the term.

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General

For those that have been GE’s for multiple courses, how does the GE experience differ for different courses? (I was thinking along the lines of what sort of expectations you have for students’ baseline of knowledge and experience, as well as if your role is more active teaching or background grading.)

*In upper-division courses, the gap between what you think students know and what they actually know starts to shrink.*

*Office hours are quieter in upper-division courses (lower-level students depend more on you than on themselves).*

*Labs / no labs, majors / non-majors.*

*All courses have certain concepts that are hard for students to grasp.*

How much time outside of labs/office hours/grading do you spend studying the material you are teaching?

*It depends, including on how well you know the material to start with.*

What do you think is the hardest part of being a teacher?

*Grading! Grading takes a lot of time and it is challenging to determine how much feedback to give and when to say “see me”. (Experienced GE’s lean toward basic comments and “see me”).*

What is the most valuable skill you took away from being a GE?

*Time management – balancing research and teaching and your own classes is an important skill.*

*Communicating with people about technical or difficult concepts – in multiple ways.*

*Communicating/presenting generally.*
**GE tips**

**Email**
What are some tips for responding to students via email?

*Is email even the appropriate venue? Maybe redirect to discussion board (especially if multiple of the same question).*

*Respond to email the same as you would in office hours.*

*Avoid the temptation to answer more than is being asked. Give student a chance to figure it out.*

*It is ok to not respond right away, e.g., batch class email and answer all at once at certain times.*

**Grading**
Any advice or trick for making grading process easier?

Do you have a way of automating your grading so save time?

*Automated grading is not a panacea though it can help to a point. A hybrid approach can work well.*

**Teaching outside your area**
Have you taught something that seems “outside” your field?

*Yes. It’s ok (though challenging) to be just ahead of the students. For example, work with them to show how you go about trying to work out an answer you do not already know.*

*Don’t try to fake that you know it if you don’t. Work on solving problems alongside the students. Help students learn how to learn.*

*Ask another GE for help.*

**Names**
Do you have any tricks for learning the students’ names?

*[We didn’t get to this one. Some ideas: use the photos for your lab on Duckweb (“Course Administration”). Ask students their name when you interact with them, even repeatedly. Practice using names all the time – apologize if you get it wrong and ask again. Students appreciate the effort.]*

**Challenges**

**Struggling students**
How do you deal with students who really seem to be struggling? I get a few of the same kids in my office hours multiple times a week who really don’t know what is happening in the class and I have a hard time helping them because every time I try to answer them simply, it leads to more questions from them and I end up having to explain incredibly basic concepts that they absolutely should know, like for loops and variable types.
This is a tough one. Even if you may not succeed, try to help the student as best you can. Maybe go into study habits, review how to read dense texts or problem specifications, etc. Bring the student to the attention of the class instructor.

How do you handle students that gave up on an assignment or class?

They may just be frustrated. Go back to what they do know/understand and move on from there.

Encouraging students is part of the job.

Late submissions
What do you when a student sends you answer to an assignment or projects a few hours after the deadline?

Do you accept extension all the time or it depends?

This is not up to individual GE's. Refer to class policy and/or refer the student to the instructor. It is important that students are treated consistently and fairly.

Many students e.g., just prior to assignment due date/time
When students find an assignment difficult and when the assignment due is nearby, there will be many students lined up during office hours and send emails, then how to manage to clear all of their doubts in a limited time?

You may not be able to, and that is ok, especially for students just starting the assignment. Prioritize students with last minute, specific questions. Try to group students/questions and respond to them once – don’t repeat the same response multiple times.

Disrespectful students
How do you deal with students who are disrespectful?

Example – students chatting in the back of class while the instructor/GE is talking. Address this gently but clearly. If you can wait to talk with the student individually, do this. Remember that this is distracting to other students, too. (During a short break, for example – “it is really distracting to me and perhaps to your neighbors when you chat while I am talking; please don’t do this”).

Example – student in office hours is challenging, thinks they know more than you do (and maybe they do). Refer them to instructor for discussion, challenge work, etc.