Department of Sociology

GRADUATE ASSISTANT WORK RULES AND POLICIES

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Fall 2017
The Department of Sociology offers competitively awarded Graduate Assistantship (GA) funding to graduate students enrolled in the Ph.D. and M.A. programs. The assistantship typically is a 9-month/academic year Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA), or infrequently a 9- or 12-month Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA). Occasionally, GA appointments may also be made for one academic semester only.

GA positions carry a monthly stipend (semester, 9-month), a tuition scholarship for up to 10 credits per regular (fall and winter) semester, and annual subsidized medical, vision and dental insurance. Tuition scholarship for up to 2 credits may also be available to Graduate Assistants for the spring/summer term, dependent on availability of funds with the Graduate School, and the Department. Tuition payment is not disbursed for any courses dropped/withdrawn after the semester deadlines and students are liable for this tuition bill.

Graduate Assistants typically take 3 courses (9-10 credits) and are required to register for at least 6 credits every regular semester. However, doctoral students who have completed all required doctoral credits, including all dissertation credits, may register for less than 6 credits or must be registered for maintenance credits.

All GTA and GRA positions in the department are covered by the Department Graduate Assistant Work Rules and Policies. Most, but not all, GA positions in the department are covered by the University Graduate Employee Organizing Committee (GEOC) Agreement (wayne.edu/gradschool/funding/assistantships/geoc).

Recipients of a GA may hold employment within the University up to 10 hours per week with prior written permission using the Request for Approval of an Additional Service Assignment form.

Every Graduate Assistant is expected to read the work rules carefully and comply with them. Graduate Assistants should conduct themselves in a manner which is professional, courteous, and conducive to a professional atmosphere in the Department and University at large. It should be understood that instances of serious misconduct, even when such instances are not explicitly covered in this work rules document, may be cause for discipline.

Questions and clarifications about the work rules should be brought to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies. Concerns about the work rules and their implementation should be directed to the Department Chair.

**Overview of Duties and Hiring Criteria**

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) are expected to assist a faculty member with an undergraduate course, or teach their own undergraduate course (depending on amount of prior teaching experience), which includes activities such as developing syllabi and assignments, grading, proctoring exams, lecturing, leading student discussions, and performing other pedagogical activities.

At the time GTA awards are made, no specific types of GTA duties are typically assigned by the Department. Such assignments are made by the Department at a later date when the teaching needs of the Department become clearer.

All GTA position awards require students to be available physically on-site at Wayne State University. GTA positions are awarded to students who have demonstrated that they have the potential for effectively teaching sociology classes at the university level.
Graduate Research Assistants (GRA) are funded by research grants obtained by faculty members and are typically awarded to students recommended by the grant recipients. GRAs perform work in accordance with direction from the faculty member who is their direct supervisor.

The contractual time commitment for a GA (GTA/GRA) position is 20 hours per week on average over the period of a semester. Given the nature of the ebb and flow of the activities for a specific position, the amount of work will vary from week to week over the course of a semester. The average time commitment across a semester should be 20 hours per week.

Appointment and Renewal
The majority of GTA awards for an upcoming academic year (August-May) or calendar year (August-August) are generally made by March 15th, but no later than May 1st. However, vacancies may occur throughout the year.

GTA positions for students in the doctoral program are renewable for up to two years and masters students for up to a year after the initial one-year appointment. Renewal is dependent on availability of funds, and good academic standing as indicated by satisfactory progress in the program (e.g., GPA, timely completion of coursework, taking prelims within one year of finishing coursework), career preparation (submission of manuscript to peer-reviewed journal, conference presentations), competent fulfillment of assistantship responsibilities (e.g., effective teaching), service and citizenship (e.g., visibility and active participation in department activities).

Additional years of funding for doctoral students in their fourth year may be possible contingent on availability of GTA positions, good academic standing in the program, and departmental needs. Rarely are doctoral students funded once they are on dissertation maintenance credits (SOC 9994).

Penalties, Remediation, and Appeal
When a Graduate Assistant fails to comply with the work rules, a range of possible penalties and/or remediation steps may be imposed depending upon the seriousness and nature of the violation.

Possible actions include (but are not limited to) scheduling a formal meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies and/or the Department Chair, completing remediation activities within the Department or outside such as through the Office for Teaching and Learning, developing a behavioral contract between the student and the Department, being given low priority for additional funding opportunities such as summer teaching assignments, being given low priority for GA assignments in future years, or having the current GA contract terminated.

A Graduate Assistant in violation of a work rule will be notified in writing and will typically be given a reasonable length of time to remedy the situation before any disciplinary action beyond the notification is taken. The Graduate Assistant will be informed in writing of the time given to remedy the situation and what means, if any, need to be taken in order to do so.

If a Graduate Assistant wishes to appeal the imposed penalties and/or remediation steps, the first step is to discuss it with the immediate supervisor and the graduate advisor. If these meetings do not resolve the appeal, a meeting should be arranged with the Director of Graduate Studies. If this meeting does not resolve the appeal, a meeting with the Department Chair should be requested. If a Graduate Assistant prefers not to meet with any of these people, a meeting with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Research in the College may be
Graduate Assistants in GA positions governed by the GEOC contract should refer to the appropriate articles in the GEOC contract regarding the appeal process. They also have a right to request GEOC union representation at any investigatory or disciplinary meeting.

**WORK RULES PERTAINING TO ALL GRADUATE ASSISTANTS**

- You must provide the Department with current contact information and update it as necessary. The department administrative assistant, director of graduate students (DGS), and faculty advisor must have your most current contact information. You should also ensure that your most current contact information appears in Academica.

- You must use your Wayne State University email address for all work-related email correspondence. The Department will use only your Wayne State email address for its correspondence with you.

- If you miss work for any reason, you must inform by email the DGS.

- You must attend in-person all departmental and graduate school orientation and training sessions related to teaching, as required by the Department and the immediate work supervisor (DGS and/or faculty member if GRA). There may be other required training during your graduate career.

- You must attend work-related meetings with the immediate work supervisor as required.

- The Department sponsors several events, programs, and colloquia designed to promote discussion and awareness of sociology scholarship and practice, and the Department’s strong expectation is that you attend these. If you are unable to do so, you must inform the Director of Graduate Studies with an explanation of your absence.

- Your duties for the semester do not end until all assigned duties are completed. For example, for GTA positions the semester does not end until all assignments are graded, the final exam is given and graded, the final paper is graded, and the final grades submitted. Your duties may extend up until the last day of your GA contract assignment.

- You must have regular attendance in the courses you are taking. Barring legitimate reasons, you should not use your GA duties irresponsibly as an excuse for not meeting your coursework obligations.

- You should not use your coursework and other academic responsibilities irresponsibly as an excuse for not meeting your work obligations.

- You must maintain a professional manner with students, colleagues, and staff at all times. You represent our profession, our Department, and the University.

- You must keep all your relationships with students professional and must not cross any relational boundaries, such as dating your students or colleagues over whom you have supervisory responsibilities. You must not indulge in any behaviors that can constitute or be perceived as sexual or other types of harassment.

Date: November 19, 2017
You must follow the directions and guidelines provided by your immediate work supervisor.

**WORK RULES FOR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS**
*(Assigned to teach their own course in the Department)*

- These work rules must be read in conjunction with the Department Teaching Policies document.

- You must be available to meet with students and the faculty supervisor during the entirety of your contract. For Fall, that means being available for meetings starting in mid-August. If you are not able to do so, then your teaching assignment may be rescinded.

- Prepare for, be present, and be on time for teaching your assigned courses.

- Your teaching assignment will involve preparation time, course delivery, grading, meetings with your immediate work supervisor and/or mentor, and office hours.

- Do not start classes late or routinely end classes early. Fully utilize your entire class period.

- You must be regularly available to students throughout the duration of the course. This expectation involves (a) replying to the majority of emails within 48 hours, (b) checking the Blackboard site multiple times per week, and (c) grading assignments/exams in a timely manner or as indicated in the syllabus.

- While you may have other obligations during the semester (e.g., research, placements), you must make time to deliver your courses and be available to students.

- If you must be absent from a class for which you are responsible or must miss your posted office hours, notify the Department main office (Michelle Matthews; matthewsm@wayne.edu), and the Department Chair (kbrumley@wayne.edu) of your absence and of your arrangement to cover the session as early as possible. Whenever possible, you must arrange to have another instructor step in to cover the class.

- Be aware of and comply with University class and exam schedules. Exam policies are listed at classschedule.wayne.edu.

- Develop your syllabus with care and in compliance with Department and University policies. Follow the Course Syllabus Guidelines and Sample Syllabus Template provided by the Office of Teaching and Learning to construct your syllabus. Submit a copy of your syllabus to the Department main office no later than the first week of classes.

- Cheating and plagiarism are serious problems that must be handled according to WSU’s Student Code of Conduct (see doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct-services.html and doso.wayne.edu/assets/codeofconduct.pdf), with special attention to Section 10.1. Suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism must be reported to your immediate work supervisor before taking any action.

- Correct, grade, and return student work promptly. Be consistent and fair in grading and when assigning points for attendance, course assignments, and exams.

- Adhere to the University’s grading system as explained in the Undergraduate Bulletin, and if...
applicable, the Graduate Bulletin. Never lose student grades; you must always keep an easily retrievable back-up. If your grades are maintained online (e.g., on WSU Blackboard), maintain a current electronic (e.g., Excel file) and a paper back-up as well. Keep accurate, current records of all points earned by students.

● Final grades must be submitted via Academica within 72 hours after the final exam. If there is any reason that you cannot do this, clearly indicate that on WSU Blackboard as well as in an email message to each student. You must also notify your immediate work supervisor and the Department Chair if you are not able to submit final grades within the required time period with an explanation for the delay.

● Keep all student emails for at least one year, in case of a grade dispute. If you are graduating in less than a year, provide electronic and paper copies to your immediate work supervisor.

● Post your office hours and hold them each week. A minimum of 1 in-person office hour for each section/course you teach must be scheduled and held each week; you must also offer times by appointment for students who cannot make it to your posted office hours. You must submit your office hours to the main office, prior to the beginning of classes, using the form provided by the Department. The office hours will be posted in the Department main office.

● Your duties for the semester do not end until all assignments are graded, the final exam is given and graded, and the final grades submitted. Your duties may extend beyond that time at your supervisor’s discretion, up until the last day of your GTA contract assignment.

For Online Courses specifically:
● Instructors must plan to devote as much time to teaching an online course as an in-person course.

● Instructors should not request to teach online courses if they anticipate significant events or personal travel that will consume more than approximately four days of their time during the semester. Online courses cannot be used as a method for instructors to travel for pleasure or engage in time consuming personal activities, while being paid to teach.

Note: For GTAs assigned to assist a faculty member (rather than teach their own class), their immediate work supervisor for the course they are assisting with will also provide work rules specific to the teaching position. Likewise, the immediate work supervisor for a GRA position will provide specific work rules for their research project(s). Students are expected to adhere to their direct supervisors rules and direction.
Acknowledgement of Graduate Assistant Work Rules and Policies

I have read the Department of Sociology Work Rules and Policies document for Graduate Assistants in the Department and familiarized myself with the rules, policies, and procedures governing my Graduate Assistantship.

_____________________________ ___________________________ Student Name and Access ID (Please Print)

_____________________________ ___________________________ Signature and Date

Please sign and return this form to the Director of Graduate Studies of the Department of Sociology by January 15th.

For office use only:

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Received by and date