MANUAL FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS
2023-2024

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The focus of this FASS handbook is teaching. It does not cover important employment matters such as your rights and responsibilities as an SFU employee, or the details of the collective agreement between SFU and the Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU); you will join TSSU when you become a TA unless you choose to opt out. New TAs are encouraged to learn about these and other matters by speaking to the Graduate Advisor in their department and by attending TA/TM Day, a teaching orientation program offered by the Centre for Educational Excellence (CEE) at the beginning of each semester (https://www.sfu.ca/cee/events/ta-day.html). This handbook is not affiliated with TSSU and neither endorses nor opposes the union or union membership.

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended to help you be a capable and confident teaching assistant (TA) in FASS. Several departments in FASS have their own discipline-specific TA manuals and/or provide pedagogy workshops to new TAs throughout the semester. So, in the event of contradictions between this handbook and the policies and expectations of your home department and the course instructor, always defer to the latter: instructors have a great deal of autonomy in terms of how they want to conduct their course and its tutorials.

What follows should be taken as guidelines and good practices rather than as prescriptive rules. Rather than feeling compelled to read this manual from beginning to end, consider it a resource you return to throughout the semester as needed, referring to specific sections that address your immediate questions and needs.

For additional information and training, SFU's Centre for Educational Excellence (CEE) offers numerous resources for graduate instructors, including instructional skills workshops (http://www.sfu.ca/cee/events/isw.html) and resources for EAL instruction, decolonization and indigenization, and anti-racist pedagogy.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS AND TUTOR MARKERS AT SFU

WHAT IS A TEACHING ASSISTANT?

Both teaching assistants (TAs) and tutor/markers (TMs) provide instruction at SFU, but there are several important distinctions between the role of TA and TM. According to the SFU/TSSU collective agreement, a teaching assistant "is appointed for a semester to assist in tutorial and/or laboratory instruction and/or related matters." These related matters often include:

- attending lectures, leading discussions in tutorials, running lab sessions for students, and holding office hours
- responding to students' questions about assigned course materials
- providing feedback on students' essays and other written work
- grading quizzes, exams, participation, online discussions, and presentations
- conducting instructor evaluations for in-person classes
- submitting course grades to the instructor at the end of the semester

TMs "provide assistance with instruction and advice to students in a distance education credit course, to mark the assignments submitted by the students in the course and provide feedback." TMs normally interact with students via email and/or Canvas (www.sfu.ca/information-systems/services/canvas.html), SFU's online learning platform or "learning management system" (LMS). TAs normally hold in-person office hours and interact with students in class and in tutorial, in addition to corresponding via email and/or Canvas. Some of the information in this guide will be relevant to TAs and TMs, but there is also a great deal of information specific to the TA role and in-person instruction.

Canvas is an open-source platform that facilitates participation, learning opportunities, and integration with social media and new technologies. Instructors may use Canvas to share important administrative materials including the course syllabus and assignment information. They may also include assigned or supplemental readings. If an instructor chooses, students can access and view their grades on Canvas, and Canvas includes a messaging platform which enables students, TAs, and instructors to communicate with one another. Ask your course instructor if they will be using Canvas to communicate information about the course and/or to receive assignments from the students. The course instructor will need to grant you access to the course site by adding you as a TA. If you encounter any difficulties using Canvas, ask the course instructor or a more experienced TA for assistance, review the Instructor Guide (https://www.sfu.ca/canvas/instructors.html) which will tell you more than you need to know, and/or contact the Centre for Educational Excellence (CEE) via the blue "how can we help you?" button here: https://www.sfu.ca/cee.html.

WHAT IS A TUTORIAL?

Across FASS, many lower-division undergraduate courses have a large lecture taught by a faculty member or a part-time (sessional) instructor and a number of affiliated tutorials which divide that mass of students into smaller groups of about 15 to 20 for the purpose of review and discussion. The larger the lecture, the more tutorials. TAs attend the lectures and teach one or more tutorials, which usually meet once a week for 50 minutes. (In Psychology, tutorials are 2 hours.) Tutorials are an opportunity for students to:

- review the content from the preceding lecture
- ask questions about that material
- practice and apply course concepts
- discuss their written assignments (which you will mark)

Overall, tutorials are meant to support student learning by providing a more personal setting to engage with the lecture material and with one another. At other universities, tutorials may be called "discussion sections"—and that, in simplest terms, is what tutorials are. But discussion does not just magically manifest when you and your students gather in a classroom, so this handbook will provide suggestions for engaging students in productive dialogue. What students most want from tutorials is clarity regarding the course content and assistance with the assignments.

You will need to read the assigned material in advance of the first lecture, and then attend the lecture to hear what the instructor is focusing on. As you listen to the lecture, take note of topics that seem unclear to you or which you suspect might be unclear to students. Make a list of key terms the instructor uses as a way to help your students review and understand the key concepts of the course. You can review this material in your next tutorial. Also take note of topics that seem to catch students' interest in lecture (or yours) and consider these as prompts for discussion in tutorial.

That sounds terrifying!

Doesn't it? And to be sure, it does take a while to feel comfortable and confident as a teacher—a couple of decades in most cases. But seriously, this handbook is designed to help assuage some of that anxiety, which is entirely natural especially if you have not taught before. And it's important to remember that

those feelings don't predict how your teaching is actually going to go; any new experience, especially if it involves an audience, is stressful. No matter how nervous you are, remember that you are going to be bringing a lot to the table.

Keep these facts in mind, and remind yourself of them often:

- You know how to be a student. This is a skill your first-year students are going to need some help with: how to be a student in university. You have this expertise.
- Your prior knowledge of your discipline together with what you will learn from the lectures will make you far more knowledgeable about the course material than any of your students. Even if the particulars of the course are ones you are not very familiar with or have largely forgotten—early modern history, a contemporary author, a methodological approach, a nineteenth-century economic theory—you have the skills as an experienced student to readily grasp the information and connect it to what you already know.
- Your students will assume you know your stuff, and they will want you to succeed. They are likely too to find you relatable and approachable. Like you, they want the tutorials to go well. And while some of them will just sit there looking blank, many will help the class go well by looking interested and participating. They will not know that you have never taught before, so don't tell them.
- Group dynamics are a fascinating mystery. It is almost certain that if you teach more than one tutorial section, they will be very different. Some groups of students will make your tutorials feel lively and effortless. Other groups of students will require more work on your part. (This is purely anecdotal, but TAs often report that their early morning tutorials are excellent. Students who are willing to come to class at 8:30 or 9:30 seem to be alert and participatory at that hour. So, if you are as well, consider requesting an early tutorial.) If a class is great, give yourself some credit. If it goes poorly—as it sometimes does for all of us—do not shoulder all the blame. Students need to co-create an effective learning experience, and you must resist the inclination to feel that it is entirely your responsibility to make tutorials successful. One thing that new undergraduates must learn is that they need to take responsibility for their own education; if they're confused they need to seek clarification, and if they're bored they need to find in themselves a way to connect with the content of the course. We are teachers, not therapists, entertainers, or salespeople.

WQB COURSE DESIGNATIONS

WQB stands for courses designated as Writing, Quantitative, and Breadth. These are requirements that all SFU undergraduates must satisfy, with final course grades of at least C–. Many of these courses are run as large lectures with TA-led tutorials. Below you will find some general information on what each designation entails from both the student perspective and the TA perspective. For detailed definitions and descriptions of WQB courses, see https://www.sfu.ca/ugcr/for_students/wqb_requirements.html.

W (WRITING-INTENSIVE) COURSES

W-courses must include some low-stakes writing assignments, an opportunity to revise a paper or to write a series of scaffolded assignments, and readings that include examples/models of scholarly writing in the course discipline. At least 50% of the final grade must be based on written work.

- Student's Perspective: The course is designed to teach, and to provide opportunities to practice and improve, both short- and long-form writing skills, through short writings (reflections and low-stakes assignments) and longer papers.
- TA's Perspective: W-courses will involve more engagement with your students' writing, both in tutorial and in written feedback on assignments, feedback directed toward helping students improve their writing (more on this later).

Q (QUANTITATIVE) COURSES

As with W- and B-courses, undergraduate students must satisfy their Q requirement by taking designated Q-courses.

- Student's Perspective: Students expect to learn how to better handle symbolic information and nomenclature and how to better evaluate math-like problems. If a student is fulfilling their Q-credit by taking a philosophy or English course, this likely means the student is not Q-confident. They may be quite nervous about symbols, empiricism, and anything resembling math. They often do not know what to expect from Q-courses in FASS; they know it won't be quite like a math course, but also that it won't be quite like other humanities courses they've taken.
- TA's Perspective: It may at first seem that TAing a Q-course is easier than TAing a W-course, since there is likely less marking to do. And to be sure, marking objective things like proofs may be easier than marking essays. But explaining the content and working with the students feels for many FASS TAs less natural in a Q-course. You will need to calm students' fears about symbols and mathematics while still acknowledging the difficulty and perhaps strangeness of these courses. The hardest part about TAing in a Q-course may be discussing the material in a way the students can grasp. Sometimes you will need to explain the same thing in several different ways to help a student understand. For example, it may seem simple and obvious to you how modus ponens works and when to use it. But for the students it will seem like magic. Learning to articulate every step of your own thought process is vital for the students' understanding, and such teaching takes a lot of preparation, trial, and error. Repetition and systematicity are key.

B (BREADTH) COURSES

Undergraduates are required to take several breadth courses to graduate. These are classified as humanities (B-Hum), science (B-Sci), or social science (B-Soc) breadth requirements.

- Student's Perspective: While students are often taking these courses to get their B-credit, there is enough variety in the course offerings that the students have choices and are thus likely enrolled in your course because it interests them. This is not always the case in Q- and W-courses.
- TA's Perspective: Students often seem to get their Ws and Qs completed in their first few semesters, while B-courses may include both students who are just beginning at SFU and those who are about to graduate. So you may have students with a lot of content knowledge or none at all. This can be both a help and a hinderance, as you can put the experienced students to work by asking them for examples from their majors. This can help to get students invested in the class. At the same time, you should not cater solely to the most experienced students; be sure that everyone is given a chance to understand the concepts before moving on.

PEOPLE

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INSTRUCTOR

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT OF THE INSTRUCTOR

As stated above, the usual structure of large undergraduate courses at SFU is a lecture taught by a faculty member or a sessional instructor, and a number of affiliated tutorial sections taught by TAs. The extent of coordination between the instructor and the TAs will vary from instructor to instructor, but ideally it will look something like this:

- The instructor should be in communication with the TAs prior to the start of the semester and should arrange a meeting with the TAs in the first week of classes. This meeting should include, among other matters, personal introductions; an introduction to the course content, expectations, learning goals, and evaluation criteria; expectations for tutorials; policies regarding late assignments and attendance; and the expected turn-around time for your marking of papers and exams. Here are some other questions you may want answered in this meeting:

  - How will TAs be expected to use Canvas? Will grading duties involve using the Canvas gradebook and/or Speedgrader?
  - If this is a W-course, how much will the lectures address writing instruction? What are the expectations for writing and writing instruction in tutorials?
  - How responsible are the TAs for preparing tutorial materials? For example, should you be creating your own worksheets?
  - How closely should you hew to the material as given in lectures and readings?
  - If you are expected—or choose—to create a syllabus for your tutorials, what does the instructor want to see included?
  - How would the instructor like you to refer to them when you're speaking to your students?

- In the first week, the instructor and you will complete a time use guideline (TUG), which covers how many hours you are expected to work and how that time should be divided among tasks. You may want to discuss:

  - How much time should be spent preparing for tutorials?
  - How much time should be spent marking? (You should keep track of the hours you spend completing all of your course-related tasks, as this information is necessary for you to determine if you are going to exceed the hours allocated to you on your TUG.)

- The instructor is in regular contact with TAs throughout the semester and is easily reachable should you have questions or concerns.
- The instructor provides you with lecture notes or at least a rough outline of topics and/or key concepts (but see below regarding intellectual property).
- At some point prior to the first graded assignment, the instructor provides you with a detailed description of the criteria to be used when grading and responding to students' written work. Students

should also receive this information so they are not forced to guess what the instructor wants and so you will have fewer grade appeals and complaints.

- The instructor holds a "socialization" meeting prior to the marking of each assignment where the instructor and TAs collectively grade a selection of papers to ensure that students are assessed fairly and consistently across tutorial sections (more on grading and responding later). Even if evaluation in your course is not neatly quantitative, it does not follow that it must be "subjective" in the sense of arbitrary or capricious. Grading may be to some extent subjective, but consistency within a course or department is not difficult to establish provided the criteria are explicit.

Some instructors are more involved than others with their TAs in the above ways, but you should not be afraid to ask for the above if they are not provided. TAs are to keep within the hours allotted on their TUGs, and instructors are not to download their own responsibilities onto TAs or ask TAs to do more work than their TUGs allow.

WHAT THE INSTRUCTOR EXPECTS OF YOU

In order to make things go smoothly, follow these guidelines:

- Read and be familiar with the syllabus.
- Read the instructor's emails promptly and thoroughly. These emails will often contain dates and times of meetings and deadlines.
- Do what's asked of you and don't wait to be asked a second time. Everyone is happier when work gets done.
- Take care of small problems promptly before they become big problems. If there's a problem with the course page on Canvas, a suspicious student paper, a student who seems to be in crisis, alert the instructor to the issue. If many of your students are failing to understand something from lecture, ask your fellow TAs if they are finding the same, and then inform the instructor. The instructor should appreciate this information.
- Instructors often have a heavy email load, so when contacting the instructor by email, keep it short and don't bury the lede.

The TAs and the instructor are a team, and should have one another's backs in regard to courtesy, professionalism, and confidentiality. But it would be dishonest to suggest that the instructor and the TAs are colleagues in a democratic, non-hierarchical relationship; the teacher is the teacher, and the teaching assistants are assistants. In fact, this handbook should come with a disclaimer: *if anything herein contradicts how the instructor wants the class to run, do what the instructor wants*. This does not mean that you must do whatever you are asked. If you feel you are being asked to do things that are outside your responsibilities as a TA as defined in the job description, the collective agreement, or your TUG, talk to the professor if that feels safe, or to the department chair if not. (These situations are not common; the vast majority of instructors are respectful toward, and grateful for, their teaching assistants.) It does mean that the instructor determines the content of the course, assignments, and exams, decides how assignments are to be evaluated and graded, and decides what to include in the course and what to leave out, in terms of both content and opinions. It is the instructor's course, practically and legally: the lectures are the instructor's intellectual property. (And for that reason, some instructors may choose not to share their lecture notes with you.)

It's likely that at some point you will disagree with the course instructor. You may feel they use poor examples or that the syllabus is too advanced. You may think they have oversimplified an important point. You may not like their politics. You may think that the marking criteria are too lax or too strict. When you find yourself disagreeing, consider whether it is worth bringing up. You may choose to tactfully ask the instructor how they feel about you using tutorial time to introduce additional information on a lecture topic and/or to offer an alternative perspective. But no matter how certain you are of the rightness of your opinion and the wrongness of the instructor's, do not critique the instructor's lectures in your tutorial—unless, again, you have permission to do so. This could lead to interpersonal conflicts and could also hurt the students if they start using your content or opinions in papers and exams and are marked down as a result. New undergraduates may not yet understand the culture of disagreement in university, so such contradictions can be confusing and destabilizing; students may feel they need to figure out who is "right" and choose a side. The instructor likely has good reasons for doing what they do. You may not agree, but you should defer to the instructor at this point. You can do things differently when you are the instructor.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER TAS

You can be assured that students in your tutorial will talk to students in other tutorials. So, since you are part of a team of TAs, you should work together to provide a relatively consistent experience for all students in the course (it is primarily the instructor's responsibility to create and manage this consistency). Although everyone has their own teaching style, strengths, and weaknesses, students across all tutorials for the course should have the same opportunities to discuss the lectures and prepare for assignments and exams. Communication among TAs is thus crucial. Talk to your colleagues about the material they will be covering and what they think is most important. While you may have some differences in priorities and approaches, be sure that you aren't leaving out anything and that you are not moving through the material too quickly (and not explaining it fully) or too slowly (and not covering all the important points).

Your fellow TAs can be excellent sounding boards for brainstorming solutions to any issues you encounter in the tutorial. If you run into any trouble, ask the other TAs if they are having similar problems and how they are dealing with it. If you're having a problem, it is likely that other TAs are having or have had a similar problem, whether it be with the course material, an assignment, or classroom dynamics.

Coordinating with other TAs can make your planning easier and your tutorials more effective. It makes no sense for 5 TAs teaching the same material with the same instructor to not share ideas and materials. If you do an activity that works well, share it with the others. If you need an activity for teaching, say, test-taking strategies, ask the other TAs (and the instructor) for suggestions.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR STUDENTS

FASS STUDENTS AT A GLANCE

FASS is the largest and most diverse faculty at SFU, with over 12,000 undergraduates in 23 departments and programs. Many students from other faculties (Business, Health Sciences, Applied Science, etc.) also

take first-year courses in FASS. In fact, the majority of students in your tutorial (especially if it's a W-course) will not be intending to major in the subject.

Most SFU students commute to campus, and the vast majority of FASS students have jobs. So as the semester wears on, your students will be tired: they are working, taking several courses, and probably not sleeping as much or eating as well as they should. (The same may well be true for TAs, so be sure to prioritize self-care throughout the semester and amidst your many responsibilities.)

FASS has a large population of students for whom English is not their first language; 20% of students university-wide are international, and 15% do not speak English at home. So it will be the case that many of the students in your tutorials lack confidence speaking or writing in English. More on this to come.

EMAIL CONTACT WITH STUDENTS

An enjoyable aspect of the TA role is that students often find their TAs more approachable than their professors. However, this familiarity is not without drawbacks. Be forewarned that students will email you for all sorts of reasons, at all hours, seven days a week unless you set boundaries at the outset. (And never give students your phone number!) So state exactly when you will respond to emails, how long students can expect to wait to hear back from you, and how they should present questions to you (e.g., students should always include their student name/number, a clear subject line, including the course name, and a specific question). Unless you establish some rules, you may get such emails as, "I was sick yesterday, did I miss anything in lecture?" and "Hi! Here's a rough draft of my final paper. Can you look it over for me before tomorrow? Thx." *Do not reply to emails sent by family members or friends of your students.* If a parent contacts you, forward that email to the course instructor to deal with. Recognize that anything you write to a student is considered public record; note too that privacy rules mandate that you email students only via their official SFU email addresses. You as TA should also use only your SFU email account in your correspondence with students.

If the course instructor has not provided you with guidelines about email communication, seek clarification on the kinds of student questions that you can answer yourself and the sort of academic support you are expected to provide via email. Ask the instructor when/if they want to be copied on TA-student emails. Once you are aware of the course instructor's expectations of you, communicate these guidelines to your students at the first tutorial (see "On the first day . . . ," below).

STUDENT DISCLOSURES AND CAMPUS RESOURCES

Again, because students consider TAs approachable, they may disclose to you personal information about their circumstances, their struggles, and their mental and physical health. This is an overture of trust on the student's part and can feel like quite an honour; our response should be kind, caring, empathic, respectful, and confidential. But it is critical to remember that we are teachers, not trained therapists. Giving direct advice to students in distress is not a job for us well-meaning amateurs. An appropriate response might be, "I'm not able to support you directly, but I do want to help and can certainly connect you to on-campus resources." See these response guides:

- for speaking to students in distress (https://www.sfu.ca/students/health/support/mental-health/faculty-staff/response-guide.html)

- for speaking to students facing sexual violence (https://www.sfu.ca/sexual-violence/supporting-survivors/responding-to-disclosures.html)

And familiarize yourself with the following SFU resources:

- If a student has a personal safety concern, you can direct them to the Office of Student Support, Rights, and Responsibilities (https://www.sfu.ca/students/studentsupport.html), or SFU's safe walk services through campus security (778-782-7991) https://www.sfu.ca/srs/campus-safety-security/public-safety/safe-walk.html
- If a student tells you they are struggling with mental health, you can direct them to SFU Health & Counselling Services (http://www.sfu.ca/students/health/get-support/counselling-services.html). SFU has free counselling services available to students, in person or virtually (https://www.sfu.ca/students/health/resources/mental-health-sfu/support-options.html). SFU students have access to free 24/7 counselling through the MySSP program (https://www.sfu.ca/students/health/get-support/my-ssp.html).
- If a student tells you about a situation that involves sexual violence, you can direct them to SFU's Sexual Violence Support & Prevention office (SVSPO) (https://www.sfu.ca/sexual-violence/contact-us.html). This office has Case Managers who can speak confidentially with students to offer options and to support them through any next steps they wish to take. Case Managers can help with safety planning, as well as accessing on- and off-campus resources. Students can call, text, or email a Case Manager, or attend their virtual drop-in hours; students can attend anonymously with their camera off if they wish.
- Indigenous students can connect confidentially and for free with an Indigenous Clinical Counsellor whose role is to help Indigenous students meet the challenges of achieving their academic and personal potential (https://www.sfu.ca/students/indigenous/wellness.html).
- International students can connect with a Transition Case Manager who can assist with managing school stress, finding housing, understanding documents, or understanding Canadian services (https://www.sfu.ca/students/health/resources/identity/InternationalStudents.html).

As a student yourself, the above resources are also available for your own well-being. As a TA, your sole responsibility is to respond with compassion and to direct students to the appropriate resources. *You should also notify the instructor of any such disclosures.* Note too that only the instructor can grant excused absences and extensions for assignments or exams.

*In situations involving sexual violence, it is essential to respect the student's privacy and decisions. They may not want the instructor to know about their situation. **It is not mandatory for you to inform the instructor about a disclosure of sexual violence from a student.**

If a student is seeking an academic concession which you do not have the authority to grant, ask for their consent to share the bare minimum with the instructor. An SVSPO Case Manager may also be able to assist with their request for an academic concession in a way that protects their privacy.

If you have any questions or concerns about how to support a student who has experienced sexual violence, you can also contact an SVSPO Case Manager for confidential guidance.

STUDENT PRIVACY

As a TA, you are responsible for a great deal of private and privileged information, from grades to correspondence with students and faculty. This information must remain confidential. Never give out a student's information, and do not discuss a student's work with anyone other than that student (with the exception of the course instructor). You should not publicly post grades anywhere; this includes posting a list of grades with corresponding names or student numbers, or leaving a stack of graded material somewhere for students to collect. As well, you cannot return a graded assignment or exam to anyone but the student who wrote it. TAs should also not retain copies of grades from classes (e.g., do not keep a copy of a grading spreadsheet on your personal computer). Further, privacy rules mandate that you email students only via their official SFU email addresses. You as TA should also use your SFU email address.

British Columbia's privacy laws dictate that no university-related information can be saved on an American server. Since this includes most major file storage services, SFU has created its own cloud storage service, SFU Vault (https://www.sfu.ca/information-systems/services/sfu-vault.html). SFU Vault functions like Dropbox, and files can be shared with anyone with an SFU email address. If you want to save a copy of something related to teaching (gradebooks, student comments, etc.), sign up for SFU Vault.

More recently, SFU has implemented Microsoft OneDrive as its preferred file-sharing platform. Microsoft OneDrive is available to SFU faculty, staff, and students, and can be accessed via the web portal, desktop app, or mobile app. Given the plans to phase our SFU Vault, it would be a good idea to visit SFU's Servicehub, where information about setting yourself up with a OneDrive account can be found (https://www.sfu.ca/information-systems/services/software/microsoft-365/microsoft-onedrive.html)

YOUR FIRST TUTORIAL

BEFORE YOUR FIRST TUTORIAL

- Figure out in advance the day, time, and room where the lecture and your tutorial(s) will meet (available at go.sfu.ca). SFU is a maze of corridors and stairwells, and the last thing you'll want to be before your very first teaching experience is late and lost.
- Visit your classroom: it will be reassuring on your first day to have already seen the space. Will you need chalk, white board markers, erasers? Ask for these items from the general office in your department.
- Familiarize yourself with the online course interface (Canvas, described above) and the physical technology in SFU classrooms. Most classrooms have an overhead projector (remember those?) and a digital projector on the ceiling that you can connect to your computer for showing whatever sort of audio-visual content you desire. *On the Burnaby campus, you will need a VGA adapter to plug into your computer.* At the Surrey campus, no VGA adaptors are necessary. For rooms in WMC and the AQ at Burnaby, you call IT Services using the phone in the classroom and ask them to turn on the projector. In RCB rooms you can turn it on yourself. Both SFU IT services and the library have one-day or semester-long bookings for laptops and AV equipment; see https://www.sfu.ca/information-systems/services/services-catalogue/browse-by-activities/students.html.
- Ask your graduate advisor for instructions on printing class rosters and bring the roster with you on day one to take attendance.
- You may wish (or be asked) to create a succinct syllabus for your tutorial. It might include:

  - your name and email address
  - the course name, number, time, and location of the tutorial and the lecture
  - your office room number and office hours (TAs typically hold two hours of office hours per week, with some variability across departments)
  - a brief statement about the purpose of the tutorial (feel free to borrow from this handbook)
  - your expectations regarding email communication and class decorum (or you may want to omit this item and develop classroom guidelines in collaboration with your students)

Keep this syllabus brief. No one reads those ten-page syllabi that cover every possible policy and contingency. Besides, much of what students need to know will be on the instructor's syllabus.

And now, a pep talk! The most difficult aspect of teaching things that you never learned yourself is really in your head: you are a great student and you just have to do a bit more work to pull off teaching it. Part of the reason you were accepted into a graduate program in FASS is that you have a set of critical skills needed to do high quality academic work. These skills are going to help you analyze the material and understand it at a deeper level, which will help you teach it. In fact, facing the material for the first time can actually help you connect with your students; you can empathize with them because, for you as for them, the stumbling points are fresh. And you're never going to fall prey to a mindset of "I read this years ago, I can teach it from memory" which leads to under-preparation.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS: PREPARING YOUR TUTORIAL

To help you adhere to the hours allotted for preparation on your TUG, you can likely do a lot of your prep work during office hours, which are often lonely affairs until the first assignment is due. So what does it mean to prepare a tutorial? Check with the instructor first to see what they expect, both in terms of preparation and content. Realize that (in most cases) you only have 50 minutes, which you will find in practice is not a lot of time. Some instructors script their classes to the word and the minute, while others work from a few bullet points and speak mostly extemporaneously. The latter takes confidence and practice. But the former—often done as an effort to ease performance anxiety—takes too much time to prepare and can seem dull, stiff, and impersonal. So to effectively prepare for a typical tutorial:

- Read the assigned material and your lecture notes, make note of any difficult passages or concepts and determine the key concepts, themes, issues, debates, or skills that you will teach and discuss in tutorial. The instructor may well have certain topics in mind. Sometimes it helps to have a specific goal in mind, such as, "at the end of this tutorial I want my students to understand how to define X." Notice that discussion is one task but there are an infinite number (or at least 5) ways to do it:

    o You could simply write a key term on the board and ask, "Who knows what this means?" You could read a definition and ask students which term you have just defined.
    o You could ask students what *they* think are key concepts and put that list on the board, and then ask other students to provide definitions.
    o You could divide the class into groups, assign a term to each group, and have groups report back with a definition and an example they have come up with.
    o You could write key terms from lecture on the board and during attendance allow students to pick a word and define it as best they can.
    o You could present a question or a problem that relates to key concepts and use it to start a discussion.

There are also an infinite number of ways to create groups. The key is to mix things up from one tutorial to the next, paying attention to what seems to work well and what doesn't (and this will often vary from one group of students to another).

- Keep an eye out for current examples that relate to course concepts: this Canadian politician is like a historical figure. This movie borrows plot elements from a novel the class is reading. This business' bankruptcy exemplifies a key theory in microeconomics. Time permitting, send your students a link to the news item in advance of tutorial and tell them to come to class prepared to discuss its relevance to the course.
- Write a brief lesson plan that includes the instructional activities you will use in the tutorial and approximately how long each activity will take. For a typical tutorial, where your main task that day is to discuss the lecture and reading material, you might approach it like this:

    o Define key terms from lecture (10 min.)
    o Read/discuss example from news (15 min.)
    o My questions from reading (10 min.)

o   Students' questions (15 min.)

(But don't do the same things in the same order every time and be open to going off-script if an activity is taking more time but seems productive.)

There may still be those rare times when you find yourself preparing for your tutorial at the last minute. But if you are able to think ahead, your prep will be less time-consuming in the long run and your tutorials more effective and enjoyable for all.

PREPARING TO TEACH STUDENTS WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS NOT ENGLISH

Recall the statistic above that 15% of SFU students do not speak English at home. You should be conscious of this fact while preparing tutorials and putting together exercises:

- Using handouts in class gives your students a point of reference if they get lost in the discussion.
- Make sure you are phrasing points and questions as clearly as possible and be prepared to explain these points in more detail (of course, you should do this regardless of your students' facility with English).
- Be aware that many international students do not feel comfortable speaking aloud in class-wide discussions; it is thus a good idea to do at least some discussion in smaller groups to help facilitate dialogue (more on this later).
- Some students' previous experience in the classroom will have been more transactional than Socratic, and they may bring this expectation to SFU: just tell me what the right answer is, what's going to be on the exam, and how to get an A on my papers. You may well need to kindly push back on these expectations, as will be discussed in the sections below on grading papers and office-hour pedagogy.

This being said, your responsibility is to teach the course material, not to teach the English language. EAL instruction is a skill and a body of research knowledge that most TAs—and most faculty members—do not have. So it's important to know going in that your EAL students will not be writing fully fluent, idiomatic essays after 13 weeks in your tutorial, no matter what you do. At the same time, most TAs will be responding to student papers and discussing written assignments, so TAs do engage with their students' writing even though tutorials are not writing classes per se. (Academic writing instruction too is a skill and a body of research knowledge that most TAs and faculty members do not have.) If you do have a student who is struggling mightily with written English and/or comprehension, there are resources that you can suggest. The Student Learning Commons (https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc) is a branch of the library that offers writing workshops, one-to-one peer tutoring sessions, and access to EAL resources. If you are concerned that a student may not have the English skills to pass the course, notify the instructor—the earlier the better. It may be best for the student to drop the course, as we don't want someone struggling all semester toward an unrealistic goal.

The Learning Commons also offers students prompt on-line feedback from writing tutors through its WriteAway service: https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writeaway-support

ACTING LIKE A TEACHER

Some people revel in speaking to a classroom full of students. Others have a lot of anxiety about it. All are responding to the same fact: teaching is a performance. Good teachers are conscious of this and use it to their advantage to make their classes better. University professors can walk into class the first day backed by the knowledge and authority that students attribute to them. (Though having read many course evaluations over the years, it is clear that some professors manage to squander that attribution in just a few weeks.) But TAs are asked to play a different role: students rightly assume that you have less expertise and experience than the instructor. But they also rightly assume that you have more expertise and experience than themselves. So if you play it right, this can be a really great role: the students see you as smart but also as approachable. Here are some suggestions for how to play this role.

Every new teacher has heard this advice, and that's because it's true: you can start out strict and loosen up later, but you cannot start out loose and then try to get strict. From the start:

- Begin class on time.
- Insist—and enforce—that people raise their hands to speak and not blurt something out or interrupt one another.
- Make clear on day one that you expect people to treat you and one another with respectful attention. This includes telling students how you would like them to address you.
- Tell students they are not to be on their phones during class, and then promptly and consistently call out violators. Every time.
- Tell students you won't answer emails after 6:00pm or on weekends—or whatever your email boundaries are—and then stick to it.
- You may want to tell students that you are not available for questions in the few minutes between your arrival and the start of the tutorial. Take this time to compose yourself and to look at your plan.

What other norms of behavior do you want to instill in the interest of having productive and respectful tutorials? Announce them on the first day (and/or write them in advance on your syllabus) and act on them consistently from the start. The inconsistent or arbitrary enforcing of policies leads to confusion and resentment. You may want to develop classroom guidelines in collaboration with your students. See **Creating an inclusive classroom culture** in Appendix E for additional guidance.

Since you're on stage, be mindful of how you use your body and your voice. Some instructors find safety behind a lectern or sitting behind a table. But if you can stand, move around, and use your hands while you're speaking—without overdoing it, of course—you will likely find it easier to keep your students' attention and to connect with your own enthusiasm. As for voice, there are three things to always bring to class: chalk, a dry erase marker or two, and water. The first two because you can't rely on them being in the room already, and water because anxiety and speaking more loudly than normal can cause your mouth to get dry. There are few experiences more unpleasant than trying to speak in front of a group when you are short of breath from anxiety and your mouth feels like a desert. Taking a sip of water makes you pause, which gives you a chance to calm yourself. Finally, be mindful that if you are talking while writing on the chalkboard—with your back to the students—you will need to speak loudly. CEE offers excellent workshops on voice and presentation skills: see https://www.sfu.ca/cee/events.html. You may also consider borrowing a microphone or amplification device if you speak softly or having difficulty hearing. Check with your department about providing such devices.

ON THE FIRST DAY . . .

WHAT TO COVER, HOW, AND WHY

The first tutorial is primarily about setting the stage and presenting your character for the rest of the term. Here are some suggestions for making your first class a success and setting the tone for the semester.

- Start by telling the students where they are and why, something like: "This is tutorial section D103 for Political Science 100. This tutorial is your opportunity to ask questions about the course content so you can better understand it, and I am here to facilitate that."
- Begin each tutorial with a brief outline of what you will cover in that particular session. If you let students know what to expect, they will be more likely to relax and participate freely.
- Remember that whatever your comfort level with the course material, you are in a better place to understand and explain it than your students are, and you can readily establish yourself on day one as a reliable authority on the subject. Try to communicate that you are an experienced academic (which you are), a capable teacher (which you are), and enthusiastic about the course (which you should at least pretend to be).
- Introduce yourself, and describe your educational background, research interests, and what you are most excited about in the course. We do not recommend saying, "I've never taught before!"
- Have the students introduce themselves:

  - Go around the room or call them from your roster. Have them state their preferred name if it's different from what is on your roster. Do not hesitate to ask students for help pronouncing their names, as this shows that you care to get it right. You may want to distribute stiff cardboard rectangles which students fold into name cards and place on their desk facing you at the beginning of each class. This will greatly assist you in memorizing their names. If you consistently take attendance right at the start of class, it tends to make students more punctual since they don't want to be marked absent.
  - You may decide to do some sort of icebreaker activity; myriad examples should be available from instructors and fellow TAs. Just don't ask your students to do anything you wouldn't want to do.

- If you have been asked to prepare a syllabus or have just done so on your own, hand out and review—and field questions about—your expectations and guidelines. A few common questions:

  - How will we know what's on the exam(s)?
  - What do I have to do to get an A? (though this question seems to come up more often in office hours)
  - What if I miss a class?
  - Is there a penalty on late assignments?

- Review your email policies. Being clear on the first day will help you and your students in the long term.

- You can get students' SFU email address through SIMS, but it's good to confirm in class. So pass around half sheets of paper on which students write their name, email address, and "anything else you would like me to know about you." Many students will leave the last item blank, but others will helpfully tell you about any learning needs and registered accommodations they have, anxieties about the course, situations and commitments (like sports) that might sometimes require them to miss class, etc. (Note that the course instructor will receive confidential notification from the Centre for Accessible Learning [CAL] regarding students with registered learning accommodation needs: extra time allotted on exams, etc. You can thus confirm with the instructor any such requests you receive from students.)
- You may get student requests to connect via social media apps or on professional platforms like LinkedIn. In the interest of professionalism, it is best to politely decline such invitations, and to not get involved in exchanging direct messages with students on social media platforms or by texting. Make this expectation clear from day one.
- Explain how you will evaluate participation, which is often the most ill-defined graded component of a course. See "evaluating participation" below.
- Rather than—or in addition to—laying down a list of rules, you might collaborate with students to build a set of expectations. Ask the students to identify their expectations of you, their Teaching Assistant. Be open to what they suggest; often, their suggestions are quite reasonable and when they are not, you can use their suggestion as an opportunity to explain why you cannot meet their expectation in that area. What are their expectations for appropriate classroom behavior, including dialogue on controversial topics? Such transparency in teaching decisions contributes to a positive classroom culture.
- Explain—and field questions about—what will be going on in the tutorial throughout the semester: mainly, clarification and discussion of lecture content, and preparation for papers and exams. Explain how tutorials are different from lectures.
- If the instructor has not reviewed the course outline in the first lecture, you may wish to do so now. Go over the syllabus, explain what the course is about, tell them when the papers are due, and exams will take place. Emphasize that they have to do the work to pass the course. They must read the readings, write the papers, hand in the assignments, and take the exams. You might also point out that there is a strong, non-accidental correlation between attendance and grades. If there will be a weekly task in tutorial—a low-stakes assignment (LSA) of some sort, or an in-class presentation—let them know so they can't claim to be surprised later on.
- Proceed with the usual review and discussion of lecture material (see "getting down to business," above).
- End on time.
- After every tutorial, record who attended and their level of participation. (Do not leave this task until the end of the semester!). Mark participation in accordance with the instructor's participation rubric, or your own if the instructor does not provide one. (See "evaluating participation," below.)
- Reflect on what went well and what didn't, and why. If you tried a lesson or activity for the first time and it did not go well, can you now see how you would do it differently next time or should you just

put it into the "never again" file? Maybe the students never got engaged in the right way, or the point of the lesson was not conveyed clearly. Perhaps you need an example that better illustrates the interesting complexity of the issue, or the discussion questions need to be clearer so the students know what they should be responding to. Perhaps it would work better with a different group of students. If students focused on one topic or one activity more than on others, take notes on what you said that intrigued them, and how you helped motivate them to keep discussing the issue.

A BRIEF COLLECTION OF DON'TS

There are many things one should not do in tutorial, most of them discovered the hard way through failure and humiliation, or in some cases through really poor judgment. So what shouldn't you do? Here is a very partial list:

- The airing of personal tribulations. Unless it's directly relevant—you're having surgery and will need to miss the next two weeks—students do not want to hear about your health complaints, relationship problems, sick cat, etc. If you have a gift for anecdotes and want once in a while to talk about your crazy roommate as a sort of icebreaker or for comic relief, that's fine. A calculus professor gave his huge undergraduate lecture course an update in every class about his pet duck George (complete with duck sounds), and the students came to look forward to these absurd yarns. But precisely because students are a captive audience, discretion and good judgment are necessary.

- Airing of labour grievances. Several years ago, a TA in FASS turned tutorials into weekly harangues against SFU's treatment of TAs. If this was an effort to gain allies, it failed: the students were angry about having their class time wasted.

- Turning it into a class about your research interests. Students do like to hear what you're interested in, and if it sometimes relates to the lectures then by all means talk about it. But do so in moderation (see above regarding captive audiences).

- Introducing impossible readings. This often goes with devoting the class to one's research interests. If you want to introduce an additional reading, ask the instructor first. And then keep it short and simple: do not overestimate the reading skills of first-year undergraduates! Students are often remarkably poor at summarizing an essay, articulating an author's claims, recognizing evidence, readings graphs and tables, etc. So rather than introducing new content, it's better to use an existing reading as the basis for a lesson in the structure of academic writing and the skill of academic reading.

- Criticizing the instructor. Students will sometimes find the lectures boring. (In fact, every class— including your tutorial—will include some number of students who find it boring.) And since students are often quite comfortable with their TAs, they might tell you during tutorial that the lectures are boring. Or that the instructor talks too much about random stuff. Or tries to be funny but fails. Or dresses poorly. And the students might try to draw you into agreement: "Do *you* think the lecturers are boring?" What do you think of his shoes?" Do not take the bait. You want to try to establish a connection with your students, but not at the instructor's expense. If you personally disagree with something that the instructor has done (e.g., you think the way that they explained a concept was unclear, or you think the grading for a question was inconsistent), do not share this opinion with your students. You should discuss any disagreements or questions with the instructor. If you feel like you cannot answer a direct question from a student along these lines, you can always

defer (e.g., the student asks, "But don't *you* think this was an unfair exam question?" You can respond: "I can discuss your concern with the instructor if you want.")

- Coming to class late. Sure, it happens to all of us—maybe once per semester we arrive a few minutes late. But if it happens regularly students get mad. As the TA, you too have a right to expect punctuality: make it clear to students that you start class on time, and then do it. Students will also make their displeasure known if a TA fails to show up on time for office hours (more on office hour pedagogy, below).

LEADING DISCUSSIONS

As a graduate student, you are probably the type of person who does all the assigned readings, hands assignments in on time, and looks forward eagerly to class discussions. Many of your tutorial students will be unlike you in those ways. It's good to know this in advance so you don't get resentful and start thinking, Why can't they be more like I was as an undergraduate? Discussions will need your help to get going and to stay productive, and getting students to participate in discussions is *the* pedagogical challenge in tutorials. There is no one magical solution, as there are many reasons students do not participate:

• They may not have read the assigned material.
• They may be unclear about what you have just asked, and so are unsure how to respond.
• They may be intimidated by, and/or unaccustomed to, speaking in front of other students.
• They may be tired, distracted, stressed, depressed, sick, homesick, lovesick, cafeteriasick, or simply indifferent.

What to do?

1. Know your audience. From the start, begin to read the room to get a sense of what a particular tutorial group will be open to; each tutorial will be made up very different students, and they may be willing (or unwilling) to participate in very different activities. Group dynamics being what they are, you won't know this until you meet them. For example, one group may be filled with extroverts who are easily distracted, so they require activities to focus their attention on the course material. Another tutorial may be largely silent and need alternative forms of participation such as short written assignments or group work. A third may be struggling with the course material to such a degree that you must spend most of the class time clarifying key concepts.
2. Tolerate silence. All instructors must develop this tolerance, and carefully balancing silence is a skill you will learn it over time. Don't give students the answer immediately. If the silence lasts too long, ask them whether they simply need more time to think about their response or whether they would like you to rephrase the question. Try rephrasing it or giving a hint. This will usually spark either an answer or a clarificatory question.
3. Keep it simple. Students may be more willing to participate if they don't feel they have to be brilliant or expansive. You might ask for "just one thing" of interest or importance from the reading or lecture, or ask, "What do you think is the most important word in this text?"
4. Find out if they did the reading. You can check at the beginning of class to find out how many students have read the assigned reading by asking for a show of hands (if you are prepared to guarantee that you will not penalize students if they have not read the material). If most students have not read, you may want to read a selection as a class or have one student summarize the key ideas for the others. You may invite students to discuss the parts of the readings they did complete. You should also emphasize firmly that they are expected to have done the reading, and you may wish to review the expectations for the course.
5. Call on them? Perhaps the best way to make sure students come to tutorial prepared and ready to talk is to call on them randomly. Teachers have mixed feelings about this, and understandably so, but you will likely find after everyone is used to it in a few weeks that your students are prepared, attentive, and increasingly confident speaking up in front of others. This requires from you the willingness to do it and stick with it, and an attitude of kindness toward students who have nothing to say or don't know the answer. Just give a quick "That's okay!" and call on someone else. A variant on this

approach is, "I'm going to ask someone from this side of the room to participate in about two minutes, so please prepare an answer. If you don't want to contribute, you can say, 'Pass.'"

You can try all sorts of ways to lead discussions except one: do not begin by saying, "Does anyone have any questions?" Asked in that way, they will not. You need to provide some of the questions, and some questions are better than others. Students tire of "teacher questions," and for good reason. Teacher questions are those where you know the right answer and the students are supposed to guess it. There is some place for such questions, but more productive of dialogue are questions that arise out of genuine curiosity or confusion—yours included. As you listen to the lectures and read the texts, note where you find yourself confused, curious, excited, or making a connection to some current event. These moments are an excellent source of good tutorial questions. So for instance, instead of asking, "According to the DSM, what are the defining traits of narcissistic personality disorder?" you might say, "Many people call Donald Trump a narcissist. To what extent does he satisfy the DSM criteria of narcissistic personality disorder?"

Here are some common techniques for discussing course material in tutorial. Over the term you can try different methods and see what works best for you and your students. It is advised to use a combination of methods in each tutorial to avoid dull repetition.

LECTURING

You may think at first that it's your job as a TA to talk constantly like the course instructor. It's not. You need to get the students to engage with the material. In a lecture-style tutorial, you're doing all the talking and reviewing of the content. You might use PowerPoint or craft a handout that asks students to fill in key definitions and concepts. The benefits of this style are limited. It gets all the right content across, but it requires little engagement from the students. It also requires a lot of prep time. It is, however, appropriate in some cases. If, for example, you're covering an impenetrable part of Kant, giving a lecture could be the only way of imparting knowledge and helping the students. The drawbacks of this method are obvious. The students don't have to engage very much and will tend to just dutifully copy down whatever you put on your PowerPoint slides rather than actually assimilating the material. Though this method alone is not recommended, it may be a good way to spend the first part of class by setting the stage for future discussion. (Or conversely, you may find that lecturing at the start of tutorial kills the energy in the room and inhibits discussion afterwards.) You don't need to talk all the time, and students should work at least as hard as you do during those 50 minutes. If the tutorial comes to an end with you emotionally spent and drenched in sweat while the students are blinking and stretching and looking half asleep, the balance of labour is off. Put them to work.

SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

Group work is an excellent way to facilitate discussion. It compels students to engage with the material themselves: they can't rely on you to just give them the answers or to cover everything. It also builds a collaborative environment. When doing group work, you may have a set of questions that you expect students to work together to answer. Six to eight questions can fill a whole tutorial, though you (and your students) may not want to spend the entire time completing a worksheet. It is recommended to circulate through the groups and discuss the questions with students in their small groups; if you sit at your desk

the entire time they're working, they are more likely to feel that what they are doing is just busy-work. Listening to them in their discussions also gives you direct access to what the students do and do not understand about the material. By circulating you get to have one-on-one conversations with the groups as they struggle with problems and develop new arguments of their own. In more talkative classes, calling on the groups can evolve into larger group discussions which allow you to respond to issues raised in multiple groups all at once. In classes where the students simply dislike talking and minimally engage in group conversations, consider asking them to write out their answers to the questions individually before discussing them in the groups. This puts them into a position where they have something to say rather than coasting in silence. And if they do still coast in silence, you can collect what they have written down individually to see what they're thinking and perhaps find new ways to engage them in your next tutorial.

Consider coming to class with four questions pertaining to the recent lecture and reading, dividing students into four groups, and giving one question to each group. After 10 minutes or so, each group takes a turn reading the question and their response. You can then ask of everyone, "Is there anything else they should have in their answer?" This small-group format gives shy students the opportunity to express their ideas in a more comfortable setting, but still allows all students the benefit of the generated ideas.

Finally, be sure you vary the groupings. Sometimes students who like to talk have made friends with other students who like to talk, creating "super groups" that dominate the discussion while other groups are happy to let them talk. This can be useful if you're really struggling to get students to participate; however, oftentimes if you disperse these talkative students across the groups, you will create a more well-rounded discussion.

A final note regarding group work is, don't overdo it: students get fed up if they're put into groups in every tutorial.

CLASS-WIDE DISCUSSION

When it works well, this is a productive and enjoyable activity. You should come prepared with questions that can prompt a discussion—ones that can't be answered with yes/no or a simple definition. Start the tutorial by asking if the students have clarificatory questions of their own about the material, then introduce your discussion questions. Or you may ask students to come prepared with a discussion question of their own.

The benefit here is massive discussion. Students get to express their views and have the broadest level of engagement with the material. The downside is that this can be difficult to pull off successfully. Students need to have prepared in advance and actually understand the material. In addition, shy students can get lost in these discussions, and slackers will be happy to let others do the talking. One way to utilize this style is following a small-group discussion (see above). Often, at least one of the groups will disagree with another. So moderating a dialogue between them helps to clarify the course content for the entire class. This can, in turn, motivate other groups to join in. The main challenge with class-wide discussion— apart from the fundamental challenge of getting students to participate—is managing it, so you must have a raise-your-hand policy in place.

Many people in discussions believe that the opposite of speaking is waiting to speak. When orchestrating a discussion, it's very important—and sometimes very difficult—to really listen, and not just be planning

your response. One way to train yourself to do this as the TA is to briefly summarize what a student says after they've said it. Some instructors will paraphrase a student's comments and make them sound even more articulate than the student's own words. This is a real art, and students appreciate it; they feel heard and they feel smart. Such summarizing is especially useful if the student goes on at some length: "So if I can sum up what you've said, you think that........ Is that correct?" Listening closely also allows you to refer back to previous comments: "What you're saying sounds slightly different from what Rachel said a few minutes ago in terms of......." It's also helpful to synthesize a dialogue once it has come to a close, so students can recognize what they've learned from the conversation.

In the same way that you don't want to lecture all the time, you don't want every tutorial to be nothing but discussion. Most students can't sustain it that long anyway. Mix discussion with in-class writing, your own discussion of course content, and preparation for assignments and exams.

SOME COMMON TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS AND HOW TO WORK WITH THEM

Yes, every student is unique, and brings a unique mind and a unique set of experiences to the classroom dialogue. But classroom dialogue is a conventional social behavior, and participants adopt some conventional roles. The point here is not to pigeonhole students, but to recognize patterns and tendencies in order to better orchestrate the conversation.

- The student who dominates the discussion, or the one student who is always ready to answer your questions. The dominant talker and the ready talker are not exactly the same person, and the latter may just be really interested in the course and willing to participate if no one else is going to. The dominant talker always wants to talk and tends to cut other people off or discount what they say. But the ready talker is an asset and should not be discouraged. That being said, you should resist the urge to come to rely on the ready talker to bail you out every time no one else is participating. If the class discussions start to seem like an exclusive chat between you and one or two students, the others will be even less likely to participate. So you might say to the ready talker when their hand shoots up, "Let's wait a minute to see if anyone else raises their hand." If this strategy is not effective with the dominating talker, you may need to talk to that person after class. Let the student know that you appreciate their contributions, but that you would like to hear what other students think about the topic and that you need to assess the other students' knowledge.
- You may have a student who likes to spin a yarn. "The character in this play reminds me of a guy who used to date my sister. I think his name was Harold   or maybe it was Carlos. He came over to our house for Christmas one year—it was probably like three or four years ago—and he and my mom got into this argument about   " Though it may feel rude, there are some students whom you will need to interrupt for the good of the class. Usually, these students don't seem to mind; they are likely used to it. After a while—but not too long—get the student to articulate why their personal story matters by cutting in and asking, "So, the fact that Harold/Carlos is similar to Iago in that way might suggest what about Iago's motivations?"
- We have all experienced students who are passionately attached to a single perspective from which they analyze, praise, or denounce all situations, readings, topics, and other opinions. If the student

proclaims their perspective from the moral high ground—as zealots often do—it will tend to silence other voices and/or turn discussions into partisan bickering. Often the best response is to acknowledge the passion and whatever insight there is, and then say, "Yes, that is one perspective on (or a partial explanation of) the debate over a standard living wage. What are some other valid positions on this issue?" With repetition, this response will, hopefully, make clear to other students that the opinion expressed is not the last or only word, and maybe even convince the polemicist of this.

- Some students really enjoy disagreeing, with the lectures, with you, and with their classmates. This is not necessarily problematic at all, unless the student dominates (see above). But the first time they disagree with you, especially if they do so articulately and forcefully, it can feel very destabilizing to a new instructor. You need to remind yourself in that moment that you do actually know the topic that you're discussing, and probably far better than the student does. Then try to stay focused on the ideas and not take it personally, even if it seems like the student is in fact wanting to challenge you. You might draw the student out—"Could you say more about why you think that?"—identify the differences in your opinions and ask students what they think, reaffirm your position with evidence if you feel the student is incorrect, or defer: "So you're saying X, is that right? That's really interesting. Let me think about that some more and we will make a point of discussing it next time." The goal is to depersonalize the disagreement so as to not get drawn into a one-on-one debate or a power struggle.

- You may be surprised by a student who appears for the first time many weeks into the semester. They will often want to know what they've missed. You can give them the backlog of tutorial handouts and assignments, but don't take it on as your responsibility to get them caught up in the course. If they have been absent from lectures as well, they need to see the instructor if they want to get caught up on what they've missed there.

- Our culture rewards extroverts, and universities do too. But listen carefully to the student who makes perhaps one comment per class—or less—but has a quiet intelligence that really adds to the discussion as long as you make space for this personality to participate.

OTHER TUTORIAL ACTIVITIES

Like discussions, activities are pedagogical tools to get students thinking about the course material in new ways. Activities are limited only by your imagination and your students' willingness. If you are struggling with what to do in a tutorial and think an activity would work, ask your fellow TAs for suggestions. Activities involve some extra preparation on your part, so be sure that the amount of prep you do for any activity is in line with the hours on your TUG. Activities are not essential to any tutorial but can often vary the experience for everyone and allow your students to get excited about what they are studying. It is important to remember that not all activities will work with all groups or for all TAs. Activities are, generally, very personality-dependent. Below are some examples of different activities that have been successful in tutorials in the past, along with some of their pros and cons. Adapt them to your particular teaching style and your particular tutorial.

MOCK DEBATE

This activity can serve two purposes: getting students to think critically about one of the key course concepts, and teaching them how to create focused arguments and counterarguments. Choose a topic that is somewhat contentious, allowing students to argue opposing positions. Split the class into two groups and have them work together as a group to create a focused argument for their side. Have the sides present their arguments to one another and ask questions. At the end, ask all the students to choose which side they think argued more effectively and discuss why.

- Pros: This may take the entire class period and involves all the students. This is a good activity to do before or around an essay assignment: it gets students thinking critically and argumentatively, and to think about what is needed to be persuasive on a particular topic.
- Cons: It should come with an explicit comment to students that most controversial issues do not break conveniently into two oppositional sides, and that the goal of dialogue and persuasion is more about understanding than winning a competition. And to see argument as debate is to see changing one's mind as weakness. Also, you really need the right mix of students for this activity to work: students who are willing to talk and willing to disagree respectfully with one another. The TA also needs to be comfortable monitoring an activity like this which requires a lot of energy and the ability to move students along through the process and keep it all under control.

IDENTIFICATION GAME

This activity is simple. Put quotations from course materials up on the board, either through a projector or worksheets and get students to identify where they come from. The idea is to pick passages that are difficult for students to identify but not impossible. If you're students are up for it, you can put them in groups to identify where the passages are from, and then discuss the results as a class.

- Pros: This is a simple activity that can be short or long depending on how you want to organize it. It is a good way to review and can be fun for students.

- Cons: This activity may not work for all disciplines as well as it works in English, Philosophy, or History. And if you don't pick the right passages, it can be too easy and thus over very quickly.

JIGSAW

In this activity you have a central problem you're trying to get the students to address. To do this, you split this problem up into smaller portions and assign each portion to a group. In the end, students have to come together, present their ideas, and then try to solve the problem by using all the pieces. The problem that they're trying to solve can be something presented in lecture, central to one of their readings, or one of the larger course themes.

Another way to do this activity is to have students work in small groups on one portion of the puzzle (e.g., Groups A, B, C, D), and then re-mix the group such that the new groups will end up with one person from every group (e.g., Group 1 should have one person from group A, B, C, D, thus having 4 pieces of the puzzle). Doing it this way means that students have time to collaborate first on the first piece of the puzzle, and then every student has a chance to "lead" in the second group since they will be the only expert for their particular puzzle piece.

- Pros: This activity is very good for teaching teamwork. It also helps students see a problem in a new way, teaching them how to break it down into smaller segments.
- Cons: You need the right problem for the activity to work. Not all problems your course deals with will be suited to a jigsaw activity, so you need to wait for the right type of problem for this activity to solve.

WORKSHEET SCAVENGER HUNT

This is a fun activity that can be done individually, in pairs, or in groups. On a worksheet create a series of questions which students will answer by looking through their notes and course materials. You can make the questions extremely specific, requiring a single sentence or a word as the answer. The idea is to make the questions readily answerable yet difficult enough that students will actually have to look through their materials. Make it short enough that students can do this activity in class—they should not take it home to complete.

- Pros: This will help student familiarize themselves with the course material. If this course material depends on specific reference material, like the OED, it can be a very effective way for your students to become more comfortable with somewhat difficult material.
- Cons: This is time consuming to set up, as it requires *you* to go through the course material yourself. It also needs the right type of materials to make sense, so in many classes this activity will not make sense.

JEOPARDY

This is an excellent activity to use in your final tutorial as a way to review the course in advance of the exam. Using either PowerPoint or the board, draw up a Jeopardy board and create a list of questions based on recurring themes in the course. You can even group your questions in columns based on themes. Choose the questions based on what you know or expect students will be tested on in their exam. If you're really into it, make the questions progressively harder in each column. Split the room into two teams and let them answer the questions going back and forth between the groups. Oftentimes the students will keep track of the "points" their team earns, but you can also keep track if you choose—though of course the points really don't matter.

- Pros: This may take the entire class period and involves all the students. It is an excellent way to review and will focus students on the key course themes.
- Cons: This is time-consuming to prepare. The more elaborate it is (opting to use PowerPoint, thematic columns, Double Jeopardy questions, etc.), the more time it will take. While the activity is worth the effort, plan out your prep time for it carefully.

For more activities, see Appendix D on the topic of in-class presentations, and "Moving to the tutorial space: Suggestions for activities and practices" in Appendix E.

MARKING STUDENT WORK

"Marking" papers consists of two separate but related acts: responding and grading.

GRADING PAPERS (AS OPPOSED TO RESPONDING)

Grades are the currency of academia. Students are graded on a scale from A+ to F, and many will be upset if they don't get the high marks they are convinced they deserve and certain they must have for their future success. In their biennial salary reviews, faculty are graded on a scale from 0 to 2.5, and many will be upset if they don't get the high marks they are convinced they deserve and certain they must have for their future success. You, as a graduate student and a TA, are both a consumer and a merchant of grades. It is unlikely that universities will make a radical shift and decide to stop giving out letter grades, but we as teachers can do our part not to encourage the obsession. In this spirit, this handbook spends comparatively little time discussing how to assign grades to papers and far more time on the more important topic of responding to papers. But because we are in an academic context of evaluation and ranking, responding to papers is often treated as secondary to grading them, and we write comments in order to justify the grade, to explain why the paper got a C+. But this is an inverted understanding of the relationship between, and the priority of, grading and responding. We should respond to students' writing as readers, assessing the writing's effectiveness in fulfilling its purpose and giving recommendations for how future writings can be better. If marking is approached in this way, then the evaluation of the paper, distilled as a letter grade, follows more or less trivially from the assessment of the paper's effectiveness according to the stated criteria. Your written comments do not justify the grade, they direct the student toward improvement. The grade just marks where the student stands along that path. Students will often ask where they "lost marks" rather than asking how they can improve. The assumption is that the paper started off as an A paper and their score decreased with each issue, rather than the understanding that points are earned (and a paper that simply meets the requirements does not warrant 100%).

Marking essays may seem at first to be perversely arbitrary and incredibly time consuming, but as you go, you'll gain confidence and be able to mark essays consistently and (somewhat) quickly. Some instructors use a letter grade scale, some a numeric scale out of 100, and others a numeric scale out of a smaller number like 15 or 20. You need to understand what the instructor expects from you, so ask for details on what their scale is and how they want it marked on the paper. Unlike the marking of exams or quantitative problems, the marking of papers is unavoidably subjective to an extent. But that does not mean the process is arbitrary; inter-subjectivity can be reached through a process of grade calibration or "socialization" in which the TAs as a group, led by the course instructor, mark a sample set of papers. It is also imperative that the instructor gives students clear instructions for written assignments and gives the TAs and the students a clear set of evaluation criteria. It should not be the job of the TAs or the students to "figure out what the professor wants." A sample set of evaluation criteria is included in Appendix G, where you will see that criteria need not be reduced to a rubric and a checklist or trivialized to citational and typographic fixations: the paper must follow APA format, the thesis must be a single sentence at the end of the first paragraph, the paper must include 4 sources (which results in the dreaded "Crouton Effect," with citations scattered randomly throughout the paper), etc. The more writing is reduced to typing, the less the students will enjoy doing it and the less you will enjoy reading it.

A word of caution here about grading papers in W-courses. Many instructors in W-courses will assign a draft and a revision of the same paper, and many will want both tasks to be graded. The grades you assign on the drafts need to anticipate and leave room for improvement. This is not a recommendation to grade drafts with undue severity, but to realize what will happen if you mark them too generously: you will find yourself when grading the revisions feeling compelled to bump the grade up from, say, a B+ to an A- even though it's still not really an A-range paper. But you don't feel you can give it a B+ again if the student has genuinely improved it. So when grading drafts, err on the low side.

Some instructors are reluctant to give out marks of A+ or A. Others are reluctant to give out Ds or Fs. Some will want you to maintain a certain grade average, and the average will depend on what your students are capable of. You often won't know what they're capable of until you have marked a number of papers: grading a batch of 10 should give you a sense of the range of responses, with a couple of excellent ones, a couple that poor or inadequate, and the rest filling the middle range.

Grade with a pencil or put the marks on a separate sheet so you can correct them later. Do not stress about what marks you are putting down until you finish the whole set. It is better to be consistent and then correct yourself than to try to correct your scale halfway through and end up inconsistent.

Students may have questions about their grades. Again, don't worry. It's perfectly normal to get a few students per assignment who want to discuss their grades with you. The clearer the instructor's assignments and criteria are, the fewer grade challenges the TAs will receive. See the discussion of office hour pedagogy below for suggestions managing these conversations productively and collaboratively.

RESPONDING TO PAPERS (AS OPPOSED TO GRADING)

If this is your first time responding to papers, you—as an experienced and effective writer—may be surprised to find yourself struggling to identify what makes a particular paper effective or ineffective. In other words, your facility with writing may not translate readily to assessing the facility of other people's writing. Just what *is* an effective argument, and how do you respond to this student's argument? If you're feeling somewhat adrift, don't hesitate to ask for some one-on-one help from the instructor. You are not expected to intuitively know how to respond to academic writing, even if you know how to do it yourself.

Let's start with a few don'ts.

The first thing to know is that it is not your job to turn a student's paper into an A paper, or to tell them how to do so: "this is a B paper, but do these things next time and you'll get an A." A student could correct everything you identify in the next paper but also introduce new problems, resulting in a paper that also deserves a B, just for different reasons. So again, focus on your response, not the grade.

Do not comment on everything or proofread the paper. While one of your comments might suggest revising with an eye toward idiomatic English usage, you are not responsible for indicating every error that needs correction. There's the temptation to think that thoroughness compels you to mark every idiomatic or formatting error, and to write down every question that comes into your head while reading. This benefits no one. You don't have the time for such attention to minutiae, and the student's improvement is not served by a paper with an overwhelming number of circles, arrows, symbols, and questions. If you circle every grammatical error, you will find yourself annoyed when the same errors

appear on the next assignment. And they will reappear, because students don't master idiomatic academic English by fixing identified mistakes in previous assignments. (Nor do grammar quizzes result in more grammatical student writing.) All that such fixation on surface-level issues accomplishes is to reinforce the belief that learning to write well means mastering rules and fixing errors. Such approaches are often defended as "the basics" that all writers must master. But obedience to rules of usage and to formatting conventions is not the basis of writing; the basis of writing is investigating the topic and discovering the controversies, arguments, and means of persuasion particular to that subject and audience (more on this in Appendix A).

Make sure to manage your student's expectations. Given your limited space and time for comments, your comments will a) not be exhaustive, and b) should focus on constructive criticism and feedback. It is recommended to let students know this, so they are not discouraged and so they know that revision is not *just* responding to your comments. Encourage your students to come to your office hours if they would like more detailed feedback or if they have questions about the feedback you've provided.

Constructive feedback is:

- Honest but kind and helpful. Structure your comments as questions or suggestions, rather than as criticisms, and use questions to identify shortcomings. You might, for example, ask students for more information, or ask whether this is what they meant to say.
- Keep in mind that you are grading undergraduate student work. Their writing is not going to be as strong as your own, and likely not as strong as yours was when you were an undergraduate. You're a graduate student because you're good at school; not all of your students will be.
- Consistent. This is particularly important in courses with multiple TAs. Remember, students in different tutorials talk to one another.
- Fair. Students should be graded according to the same criteria.
- Transparent. Students should understand where they earned and lost marks.
- Prompt. Ask the course instructor to identify their expectations of you.
- Specific. Identify examples of the weakness/strength you are critiquing/praising. Couch comments in "I" terms: "I got lost here," or, "I'm confused, did you mean to say . . . ?"
- Succinct. Identify the most important areas to comment upon, as a profusion of comments and suggestions can be overwhelming.
- Connected to the grading criteria and to the grade itself. Write your comments in terms of the criteria for the assignment and be mindful that your effort to respond positively to a paper that receives a low grade does not seem confusing and contradictory.
- (In many instances) formative. Give students specific examples of how they can improve their work. Ask the instructor if you should be providing formative versus summative feedback on the different course evaluation components. For example, you might provide more formative feedback for short written assignments than you will on examinations, which might focus more on summative feedback, since students won't be revising their exams.

The next few paragraphs will elaborate on some of these. Remember, it is important to not exceed the allotted hours on your TUG; you don't want to get yourself into a situation where it's taking you 45 minutes to mark each paper.

Honest but kind and helpful. As noted, some people like using "I"-statements so they can be honest (and helpful) while lessening the harsh impact of comments like, "This part doesn't make sense." Something like, "I've read this sentence a couple of times and it's still unclear to me" not only sounds less critical, it locates your critique in the writer-reader exchange which the paper is supposed to be mediating. On the other hand, students sometimes read such comments as the TA expressing a personal preference rather than using an objective set of criteria to assess the paper. So frame your "I"-statements in the terminology of the evaluation criteria.

Succinct. See above regarding not marking every surface error. Start with big picture concerns. Is the student's argument clear, its development well-structured, and its claims well supported? Have they met all the requirements of the assignment? If so, then you can move into more detailed comments about specific points in the paper and matters of usage and style. But it is very rare that a paper has no big picture concerns.

Here is one approach to marking that is succinct, focused, helpful, and efficient:

1. Identify three or four topics to comment on, guided by the evaluation criteria that the instructor has given you (see sample in Appendix G). As you read the paper, make a couple of pen marks or one-to-two-word comments as needed to remind yourself of things you want to come back to and comment on. By the time you get a couple of pages into the assignment, you will likely have a sense of its main strengths and weaknesses.
2. Make a note of these—again, in just a word or two—at the end of the paper.
3. When you have read the entire paper, number your concluding comments 1 to 3 (or 4 at most), with a positive comment as 1. (It's a pedagogical cliche, but it really is a good idea to start your concluding remarks with something positive, though it may sometimes be challenging to think of something.) Then go back through the pages and write the corresponding number in the margin in the places where that strength or weakness appears. So let's say final comment 3 is:

   The paper is lacking an overall sense of control. The example of capital gains taxes appears in several different paragraphs, but it's not clear what claim that example is supposed to be supporting. It seems like capital gains tax is one of the most important topics in your paper, so if you can state clearly why it is so important (given the paper topic) and devote a few paragraphs exclusively to that topic, the paper will seem more logically organized with a clearer purpose.

(You can see from this comment the preferability of responding to papers electronically: the above comment would take a long time to write by hand.) If this is comment 3, go back through the paper to the various scattered references to capital gains taxes and write "see comment 3" next to them. Do likewise for your other numbered final comments.

What if one of the paper's main issues is "grammar?" Note that when students are reaching to express an idea that is right at the edge of their cognitive ability, their prose will often suffer. So keep an eye out for those moments when flawed or confusing writing is indicative of latent cogency. Sometimes, of course, it's just bad writing, but make sure that what you're identifying as a "grammar" issue isn't better addressed by engaging with the ideas expressed.

If the issue is truly a problem of idiomatic expression or usage, first determine the level of the agrammaticality's interference in the paper's effectiveness. Let's say you have a paper from an EAL

student and you can readily understand it despite some errors involving definite and indefinite articles ("the" and "a") and count- and non-count nouns. Are these errors significant enough to make your short list of final comments? If not, then ignore them; as long as the student continues to read and write in English, they will correct such things in time, though not necessarily in one semester's time. If the errors are significant enough to interfere with your comprehension, then identify one (or at most two) repeated errors, address them in a final comment, and give some examples of how they should be written correctly. Students won't learn anything from a paper with every error marked, but they can put into practice on a subsequent paper one or two clearly identified examples of idiomatic usage.

This numbered method of response gives the student a neater set of comments to review, a manageable number of things to work on next time, and a clear understanding of where those final comments are coming from in the paper itself. You can also add a few random one-time comments throughout but try to keep them minimal. Once you get used to this method, you'll find yourself responding to the paper more on conceptual than typographic grounds, since you are not losing the flow of the argument by stopping to circle every punctuation mistake. You will also find that it saves you time.

Specific and formative. These comments are neither specific nor helpful: "unclear," "awkward," "reword," "thesis?," "?," "good!" There are a couple of important attitudes to adopt toward marking papers: an understanding of the difference between recognition and response, and a willingness to model better writing, to "take pen in hand." Regarding the former, note how the sample comment above about capital gains tax recognizes the problem in the paper and also responds to it: here's the problem, so next time try this. It's the difference between "You don't have a thesis" and "The paper is more a summary of cited opinions than an argument advancing your own opinion. One indication of this is that the paper does not have a thesis, a clear statement of your own contribution to the dialogue among all the opinions you cite." The second comment points out the absence of a thesis but also says how that absence affects the entire paper (and reflects, perhaps, the student's misunderstanding of the assignment) and says what a thesis is supposed to do.

Taking pen in hand was for many years verboten in writing centre pedagogy. This has started to change: demonstration and imitation are critical for learning any craft, including the craft of writing. You might, for example:

- Rewrite one of the student's sentences for clarity and concision (see "Style" in Appendix A).
- Renumber the paragraphs to show why the paper would be stronger if the content were rearranged.
- Rewrite the thesis, either to make it actually fit the paper that follows or to make it more cogent.
- Write, "This quotation seems randomly inserted in the paper; it does not support the claim you're making in this paragraph. Given what you're wanting the quotation to do in this part of your paper, this other quotation from the same reading would be much more effective."

SOME COMMON TYPES OF UNDERGRADUATE PAPERS

You will read some excellent papers, papers that hold your attention and make you think. These papers may be easy to grade, but they're not necessarily easy to respond to; you don't want to just write "great!" all over the place. So respond at the level of claims and ideas, offering your own disagreements, refinements, or suggestions for other things to think about, etc. Respond from your readerly experience:

"This part is very persuasive because . . . ," "This is a very thorough and accurate summary of the problem," "Instead of just repeating the introduction, this final paragraph really extends the argument by . . ."

You will also read papers that are less than great, and recognizing some common types can direct you toward effective response; yes, every paper is unique, but there are still some common types:

- Two and a half pages of indifference. Don't put more time and care into commenting on these than the students put into writing them.
- The midnight special. Composed at the last minute, and it shows. Recommend time-management and revision.
- Five pages of jargon. "Every discipline has its catchphrases that allow us to stop thinking," as the philosopher John Searle says. This paper talks the disciplinary talk, but be sure there's an actual argument with examples and not just crowd-pleasing gestures. Prompt the student to define rather than assume the meaning of their key terms.
- The zealot's monologue. May also be five pages of jargon. Identify places where the paper will be stronger if the author recognizes that other opinions exist.
- Beautiful but empty. The paper is eloquent and stylish, but lacking in substance and cogency. Watch out for these: it's easy to grade them too highly because they appear so much "better" than the average. But it's just a veneer.
- Dull and dutiful. Fulfills all the requirements of length, citation, formatting, etc., but shows no signs of life. You may want to take pen in hand to show how the student could revise for a more concise style, or suggest they take a less safe and obvious position, or find some way to engage the assignment through some aspect of the topic that interests them.
- A brief history of everything. Out of fear of not meeting the page limit, students will attempt to write a paper not about "Islamophobic representations of villains in Hollywood action movies after 9/11" but about "racism in movies." Help the student narrow the topic to something more appropriate and do some invention work with them (see Appendix A).
- In conclusion, my thesis. You may find that a paper which lacks a focused or compelling argument suddenly stumbles upon one in the final paragraphs. Because writing is generative and epistemic, students sometimes figure out what they're writing about in the process of writing. Respond to such a paper by identifying the surprise thesis and by indicating how and where it can be integrated earlier in the essay to cue the reader to the paper's purpose. There is nothing wrong with stating one's position at the end of an essay, and it is possible that the essay is just fine as is and the writer intended it to be structured that way. But it is more likely unintentional.

MORE ON MARKING AND TIME MANAGEMENT

It is important for you to allocate your time carefully to ensure you are managing your studies, TA responsibilities, and your other personal and professional obligations while making space for your own well-being. So when marking a stack of papers:

- Use a timer and set a limit on how long you will spend on each task. As a TA you work a specific number of hours per term, as defined in your TUG. If you use a timer, you can ensure that you give each student as much time as you can, while adhering to your hours. If the timer goes off and you have not reached the end of the paper, you might want to stop writing detailed feedback and work quickly to summarize your response and assign a grade.

  o One method for marking is to look at the number of papers you have to grade and divide it by the number of days until you have to return them. This way you can mark a smaller number of papers each day and avoid marking exhaustion. Others find this approach excruciating, preferring to take advantage of momentum to get the marking done in a couple of days.

- When grading a set of essay questions (as on a midterm or final), grade one question at a time for the entire set. Such grouping and grading will save you time and promote consistency in your marks.
- When you notice many students making the same mistake, stop commenting on it on individual papers/exams and simply write, "I will discuss this problem with the class." Use the next tutorial to describe the issue in general terms (without identifying any specific student), model a better way, then give students time in tutorial to practice.
- Since you will find common and frequent flaws, it is a good idea to begin to assemble a document of stock comments which you can use to respond to repeated instances.
- Practice. Many instructors require their TAs to hand in a sample of their marking so that they can ensure consistency in the way the TAs mark. This is normal practice and will help you feel more confident that you have graded fairly when you hand back assignments.

RETURNING PAPERS

It is hard to look a student in the eye and give them a D, especially later in the semester when you have come to know and like (most of) them. If you are returning papers physically in tutorial, it is tempting to leave them on a desk at the end of class and bolt from the room. But don't. It is good practice to return papers five minutes before the end of class and ask the students to then sit and read your comments. Do not take individual questions about your comments immediately: you may even want to mandate a 24-hour waiting period. Instead, tell students they should come see you in office hours to discuss any questions they have. This waiting period requires students to sit with the evaluation for a day or more and (hopefully) think about your comments, rather than react in that initial moment of indignation and dismay. You may choose to remark upon a few common problems in the paper set as you return them. These common problems are good content for future writing lessons in tutorial.

EVALUATING PARTICIPATION

Thinking about what good participation is, putting that in writing on your syllabus, and assessing students accordingly is good pedagogical practice, demystifying that 10-15% "attendance and participation" grade. It also reduces the likelihood that you will get complaints or challenges to final grades. Try reaching out to students who remain totally silent through the first few weeks of tutorial; often a friendly nudge or a

conversation about class participation can make a big difference. Or encourage students to come to tutorial with a comment written down and ready to go. Make space for students who are not comfortable speaking in front of the group to instead earn their participation marks through other methods such as group discussion, in-class writing, or questions they ask you through email or in office hours. (Make this decision in consultation with the instructor, since not all instructors will embrace this approach to participation.) Often your instructor will have guidelines for assessing participation in tutorial, but see also Appendix H for an example of participation self-evaluation.

Liz Elliott provides this useful hierarchy regarding effective and ineffective participation:

- Student actively participates in tutorial discussion in a manner that is respectful of others; demonstrates sound awareness of the content of the week's readings and can tie this understanding to the group discussions; uses critical thinking skills.
- Student respects others; participates in tutorial discussions with an adequate awareness of the week's readings and attempts to tie this understanding to the tutorial discussion; makes tentative efforts to use critical thinking.
- Student is in attendance but is not engaged with others in the tutorial; occasionally participates in tutorial discussion and demonstrates some awareness of the readings; hesitant attempts to link the reading materials to the tutorial discussion; some evidence of critical thinking.
- Student attends but does not participate; demonstrates little to no awareness of reading materials; does not deploy critical thinking skills.
- Student is absent without reasonable excuse, student engages in disrespectful behaviour towards a peer/the TA, or student is on their phone during tutorial.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

A study by Martine Peters at the Université du Québec en Outaouais identifies "four essential dimensions to reduce plagiarism:

- the ability to search for and find information;
- writing skills;
- knowing how to reference documents;
- knowing what plagiarism is and why authors shouldn't do it"

(https://www.universityaffairs.ca/news/news-article/understanding-and-preventing-plagiarism)
Academic honesty, then, is largely a matter of knowledge and experience. It is thus important to distinguish ignorance from fraud, and in cases of plagiarism, the former is far more common. A student may use without attribution an introductory paragraph from Wikipedia because that's what they did in high school or because they don't know how else to begin an essay (There's always the dreaded, "Since the beginning of time, . . ."). Or they don't know that paraphrases require citation. Make note of the error, point out that such patchwriting is a form of plagiarism, and watch for it in their future writings; if they do it again, you should inform the instructor. If the paper is riddled with such borrowings, you may want to be more firm and take the matter directly to the instructor. In other words, addressing plagiarism requires some degree of judgment on your part, though you must be consistent in how you deal with it. Here as elsewhere, ask the instructor to set the policy for the class, as this is not your responsibility.

A paper that seems far too sophisticated for a first-year student might be an instance of fraud. Have the instructor assess it, since it's the instructor's job to deal with plagiarism cases, not the TA's. Another indication of possible willful plagiarism is a paper that has a fair number of usage errors and clunky prose but periodically blossoms with sentences 20 words long, elegantly constructed with subordinate clauses and semicolons. Then it reverts back to the clunky prose. The inadvertent plagiarism of patchwriting tends to show as an opening paragraph that is better than the rest; willful academic dishonesty tends to have these scattered moments of imbedded eloquence.

Pay attention to things that arouse your suspicion, but don't approach student writing with suspicion, looking for plagiarism and doing an internet search of every phrase that seems "too good." This will consume your hours and is a joyless and adversarial approach to teaching. Ask the course instructor at the start of the semester what they would like you to keep an eye out for in papers and exams.

For information on and support on academic integrity, including relevant definitions and policy, the academic disciplinary process, student support and resources, please visit Academic Integrity at https://www.sfu.ca/students/academicintegrity.html

OFFICE HOURS

TAs normally hold two hours of office hours per week, with some variability across departments. At the start of the semester, your office hours will be an opportunity for solitary reflection. During the downtime of waiting for office visitors, you can prepare upcoming tutorial notes/handouts/slides, or do your own homework. But once the first assignment is handed out, and especially after students receive their first grade, your office hours will get busier. Take office hours seriously: do not be late, and do not miss office hours without a very good reason. If you must miss office hours, contact your instructor to see what options are available to you: perhaps another TA can cover those hours for you. In one sense, holding office hours is a non-complicated task: just open the door, relax, and wait for students. A student will arrive with questions, and you will respond accordingly. But working with students individually is very different from working with them in tutorial, so some suggestions and strategies follow. Your style and approach will be up to your own proclivities, within reason—i.e., be professional. The most common reasons that a student visits your office hours will be to discuss the readings, to ask questions about upcoming essay assignments or exams, or to review a recent essay or test grade.

If a student wants to discuss one of the readings, this request has the benefit of allowing the student to practice paraphrasing arguments or viewpoints; you may find that many new students do not have sufficient experience with paraphrasing, so helping them practice this activity in office hours can benefit their writing. As an expert in reading academic writing, you can model how you approach readings: how do you begin? How do you take notes? How do you identify the research question and/or the thesis? Which parts do you read closely and slowly and which parts do you tend to skim through, and why?

Students will often visit your office hours too late, after they have already failed an exam or an assignment. In the case of exams, feel free to review the correct answers with them. When they come in with questions about an upcoming assignment, do not give them the answers or guide them through that specific question. Instead, guide them through a similar question (perhaps one from a tutorial worksheet, the book, or the lecture slides). If they come in and just say that they are lost, ask them what their current understanding is to gauge what they may be missing, and then try to work through one example for them (taking pen in hand). After that ask them to do a similar question themselves and guide them through it— the way you would during a tutorial.

Regarding writing assignments, students will come to you at various stages in their writing process. At the initial stage, when discussing an upcoming assignment, it is best if you request students to directly explain and articulate what they don't understand about the task or what they have in mind for their writing. Articulating what we don't know or understand is an important skill, so don't let the student transfer that work onto you by simply saying "I don't understand the assignment" (or the reading).

Often students will come with a thesis, an outline, or a draft and ask you to assess it. The first two are very hard to assess, since what ultimately matters is how the thesis or outline is realized and argued in a finished paper. If students ask you to comment on a draft, you may prefer to tell them that you will take it home and respond by email; it takes a lot of time to read and respond to a draft, and you may find too that you can concentrate on it more effectively when you are alone. (Depending on the assignment, the instructor's expectations, and the number of hours on your TUG, you may have a policy that you don't read drafts at all unless they are specifically assigned.) If you do review a student's draft, start by having them tell you what their concerns are: what do *they* think it needs? This sort of writerly self-awareness is a critical skill to begin to cultivate.

SOME COMMON OFFICE HOUR QUESTIONS

Here are some common concerns that students express:

• "How's my thesis?"

See above: a thesis is only as good as its explication in the paper. That being said, a problematic argument may be either too one-sided or too wishy-washy, or maybe so self-evident that it's not worth arguing; a thesis needs to be a claim that an intelligent person could disagree with.

• "How do I make it longer?"

Do some invention work with the student in office hours (see Appendix A).

• "It doesn't flow."

Students say this a lot, but it's seldom clear what it means. So have the student identify places in the paper that don't "flow," then assess what the problem actually is: a lack of transitions between paragraphs? Lack of coherence among sentences within paragraphs? Jumping around among loosely associated topics? The latter problem can be traced back to a lack of focus about what question the paper is responding to and what it's arguing, or a failure to limit the argument to something appropriate for 5 pages or so. If it's unclear why sentences or paragraphs are in the order they are, work with the student on developing a coherent (but flexible) overall plan for the paper—as opposed to a rigid outline—and/or a list of key points that will each need a paragraph or paragraphs devoted to them and can thus serve as structural components of the paper.

You may also want to direct students to the WriteAway service offered by the Learning Commons (https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writeaway-support). Students can submit a paper or draft on-line and receive prompt feedback from a writing tutor.

QUESTIONS ABOUT GRADES

Students will often come to office hours unhappy with a grade they have received. If a student's exam has been graded incorrectly, just bring it to the instructor's attention and change the grade. In most cases, though, the grade is fair and the student is simply unhappy about it, feeling their work deserves better. It's important not to let the student establish the dynamic whereby you are expected to convince the student that the grade is just and accurate. Rather, it is the student's job to explain why, according to the assignment, the criteria of evaluation, and your comments, the paper deserves a higher grade. This is a tall order, but fair and appropriate. Ask the student if they have read and have any questions about your comments. Then ask the student, "In what respects does your paper fulfill the requirements of the assignment at a higher grade-level than the grade given?" If you feel the student has a case, say you will discuss it with the instructor. Then meet with the instructor to explain the matter and why you would like to raise the grade. Often students don't really have a case, but are just disappointed and perhaps worried: "I worked really hard on it," or "I got 'A's in high school." You can kindly tell them that there is no way to grade effort, and that most students at SFU got good grades in high school so now the expectations are higher—but they wouldn't be here if they weren't up to the task. A student may remain dissatisfied and want to bring the paper to the instructor for regrading. The student is entitled to do so. A student may say they need a certain grade in the course to stay in their program, or to receive financial aid, or for some

other reason, and this may indeed be true. But it is not your responsibility to give students the grades they want or need. Your responsibility is to teach them well and help them when they seek your help. You can, if it applies, tell them that students who come regularly to tutorials and office hours tend to do better in their courses.

Sometimes multiple students will be lined up outside your office door waiting to speak to you. You might want to ask if some are willing to have office hours with you as a group. (You can tell your students that this group discussion is voluntary, and if they still wish to talk with you one-on-one, then that is possible, provided that time is available to do so). You may, if asked, arrange to meet with a student outside of your regularly scheduled office hours, but be mindful of your time, your TUG, and your non-TA responsibilities.

TAS AND EXAMS

There are three ways a TA could be involved in examinations: composing/editing, invigilating, and grading.

COMPOSING/EDITING THE EXAM

Some instructors don't give their TAs copies of the exam beforehand. This ensures that you don't accidentally let the students know what will be on the test. It also means that you won't be involved in creating the exam. But other instructors do send the exam in advance and will ask if you have any suggestions. Take note of any exam questions that seem vague, or of terms you don't know. Don't be shy about reporting any concerns: since the instructor has asked, they would much rather hear it from you before the exam than deal with a grading mess after the exam.

INVIGILATING THE EXAM

Every TA can expect to be involved in invigilating. For midterms, you'll be invigilating during the typical lecture period. For final exams, take careful note of the location, time, and date. Show up to the exam period at least 10 minutes in advance and discuss with the professor how they'd like the exam distributed and how they'd like you to respond to student's questions and bathroom requests. Typically, students will ask three types of questions: administrative questions, clarificatory questions, and content questions. Do not answer content questions. For administrative questions, you should know how long the exam is, how much time they have left, whether they can use a pen or a pencil, whether they need to write down a translation key, if they need to stay the whole time or can leave when finished, etc. Most clarificatory questions can be answered immediately. Often students will ask about vocabulary words particular to the question, which may border on a content question. With these sorts of questions, feel free to say, "let me ask the instructor and I'll get back to you." If you notice many students asking the same question, ask the instructor to briefly make an announcement about it. For example, if a lot of students don't know whether or not a penguin is a bird and that's necessary to answering the question (this really happened!), you should tell the professor.

You should be constantly moving around during invigilation. It means more students get the chance to ask question and it helps discourage cheating. If you see students you think might be cheating, go stand by them and observe. Tell the instructor if it continues. It's usually very hard to know for sure if they're cheating, but standing nearby usually makes them uncomfortable enough to stop. Cheating is easier to recognize during Q-course exams because cheating students are usually working on the same line in the very same proof or problem. This is unlikely to happen if they're not cheating. If you see this, tell the professor. Near the end of the exam ask the instructor how they would like you to collect exams. They will usually position you in one area of the room and ask you to collect that area's exams.

GRADING THE EXAM

After the exam, you should expect to have a marking meeting where the instructor goes over the rubric and explains how you should assign points and partial points. Think about potential pitfalls or ways the students might answer the questions. Raise these during the meeting so you'll know how to mark such answers. You'll also usually mark a couple of exams/papers together to calibrate your grading. When it comes to marking exams, ask the instructor if the TAs can collaborate. It is often more efficient to mark fifty responses to the same short question than to mark ten responses to five different questions. If each TA marks all the responses to one question you will all finish more quickly and with more consistent marks.

OTHER SFU RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS

The TA Hub is a virtual resource created to help SFU TAs strengthen their teaching, leadership and interpersonal skills. The TA Hub combines online and in-person modules to help prepare all SFU TAs for their important roles supporting undergraduate students, including: preparing and planning engaging tutorial or lab lessons; creating an inclusive learning environment; grading strategies; strengthening communication skills; building confidence in teaching; and balancing teaching priorities with your studies and other priorities. .

The TA Hub is led by the Centre for Educational Excellence and People Strategies with support from the Student Experience Initiative (https://www.sfu.ca/cee/TAHub/).

IN CONCLUSION, FOR NOW

This TA training guide is intended to remain a work in progress, to continually incorporate additions, subtractions, refinements, and new pedagogical ideas as TAs in FASS put it to use in their tutorials. We welcome your feedback and contributions to future editions; please send them to the Associate Dean for Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in FASS at fassadgs@sfu.ca

APPENDIX A: WRITING AND WRITING SUPPORT IN TUTORIALS

In a 2019 survey of FASS teaching assistants, the topic TAs most wanted training in was writing instruction. Writing studies is an interdisciplinary academic field with its origins in Classical rhetorics and its current researchers working in numerous disciplines including linguistics, rhetoric, English, psychology, education, philosophy, business, and computer science. To boil that all down into an appendix of teaching tips is to unavoidably over-simplify writing and writing pedagogy, and even runs the risk of trivializing it or reinforcing the common attitude that anyone who can write well has the expertise to teach writing. A brief appendix for non-experts on the topic of writing instruction is like a brief appendix for non-experts on the teaching of politics, the history of literature, or the field of mathematics. So what follows comes with the caveat that it barely scratches the surface. It also comes with a repetition of the opening disclaimer that if the course instructor wants things done differently, then that's the way to do it. There is no one best way to help students with their writing, but what follows are some time-tested sound practices.

If you're teaching a particular skill—invention (more on that in a moment), paragraph coherence, transitions, integrating quotations—always introduce it, model it, and practice it. That is, explain what you're teaching and why it matters (how it makes writing more effective), show some examples from published authors in the disciplinary genre and model it yourself on the board or on a handout, and then have students practice it in tutorial. Since students need to do more writing than you have the time to read and mark, have them evaluate each other's efforts in low-stakes, in-class practice exercises. There's nothing at all wrong with a tutorial which is quiet—and you are quiet—because the students are all writing.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of writing assignments: low-stakes assignments (LSAs) and longer, graded assignments (essays, papers, etc.).

LOW-STAKES ASSIGNMENTS (LSAS)

Some instructors ask you to write your own LSAs and others will provide them for you. LSAs are usually not graded but may be counted toward participation, and brief, informal feedback may be provided as well. If writing your own, choose a question that students are capable of writing about for 10-15 minutes. The kind of question you choose will depend on the type of goal you have. You may want to use the LSA to generate discussion. Students may find it difficult to answer a question immediately when it is posed verbally, but if they've already taken 10 minutes to write up an answer, they'll have the chance to think it through and will be more willing to speak up. If this is your goal, an open, discussion-type question like "how well do you think Locke's theory of personal identity would apply to a courtroom drunk driver today?" can help to prepare them for the discussion to follow.

LSAs can be a good way of exploring essay topics as well. If you know the topic in advance, ask students to write a paragraph or so summarizing different perspectives on the topic, and where they themselves currently stand and why. This gets them thinking about the topic before they write about it at length.

When dealing with difficult readings, it might be helpful to use an LSA as a way to practice close reading. Present the students with a vital passage from the text and ask them to summarize or analyze it. Have

them highlight the parts they don't understand and ask them to explain what implications this passage has for the topic currently being explored.

Finally, you can use LSAs to gauge basic understanding of the material. Ask students to reconstruct an argument, explain a term, or discuss a couple of positions on some matter of controversy. This will help you determine how well your students are following the content.

Marking LSAs should take very little time. They should be marked primarily for completion, although instructors may have different expectations. Instead of providing a lot of feedback, you may choose to implement a check system. When a response is good, you put a check plus on it. A response that's on track but not quite perfect gets a check. A bad, or off-topic response gets a check minus. Add a couple of very brief remarks. Let the students know how this system works before handing back their first LSAs.

LONGER ASSIGNMENTS

UPON FIRST RECEIVING THE ASSIGNMENT

When your students first receive a paper topic, go over it in detail in tutorial, perhaps as follows in regard to content and formal aspects:

Content:

- What is being asked? What are some ways you can imagine students misinterpreting the task? If the assignment asks students to take a position, point out that simply summarizing the issue and comparing published opinions will not be an adequate response. Nor will a zealot's monograph which ignores all other opinions be an adequate response. Students should ask themselves (and discuss):
- What is this academic conversation about?
- What are the main positions?
- Why does the conversation matter?
- What is my initial, provisional position in this conversation?

Formal aspects:
Students are often more concerned with these details than with the substantive concerns. Your work is to answer their questions and clarify the formal expectations in order to then move on to more substantive matters. What are the assignment's formal requirements?

- If the paper has to be in MLA or APA format, then so be it. But you have about 11 hours in total with your tutorial students, so don't waste that precious time drilling them on formatting rules. Instead, direct students to the SFU library's citation guides (https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/cite-write/citation-style-guides) and tell them to carefully adhere in their own papers to the rules described and illustrated there. Students will have a lot of questions when they first receive an assignment, and the honest answers to some of these common questions are rarely given (and may seem unsatisfactory to students accustomed to prescriptive, rule-based instruction):
- How many sources should I cite?

- There's really no way to know that in advance, though assignments will often require a particular number. One has to begin planning and writing the paper to see where more information is needed to explain the issue, or where evidence or expert opinions are needed to support one's claims, to introduce subtle distinctions, or to serve as counter-statements.
- How long should the paper be?
- As long as it needs to be to adequately address the topic—though most assignments will probably have a specified length requirement. Keep in mind that quality is favoured over quantity—a longer paper is not necessarily better!
- Do I need an intro and a conclusion?
- Since all writings begin and end, it is best to do so purposefully. But beginnings and endings, in writing as in life, can be difficult. Thus do students resort to "According to dictionary.com," "As Mark Twain once said," "Since the beginning of time," etc. Suggest that students write the introduction after they've written some or all of the body of the paper; writing is a recursive rather than a linear process, and it is often easier to introduce a paper that has already taken shape to some extent.
- Does the thesis have to be a single sentence?
- No.
- Does it need to come at the end of the first paragraph?
- No.
- Well, then how long should the thesis be and where should it be?
- Whatever seems most effective, in the writer's judgment, in informing the reader what the purpose of the paper is.
- Can I use "I"?
- In the humanities, academic writers use "I" all the time. In some genres of writing in the social sciences, however, it may not be the norm, so look at published examples of the type of writing the students are doing. The question to ask is not should you or shouldn't you, but why would you want to use "I"? It brings the author explicitly into the text and this influences the style of the text. Does it influence the style in a way that makes the paper more effective? The answer will vary by topic, purpose, audience, and discipline. But as a blanket prohibition, "don't use 'I'" has no justification.
- Do I need a bibliography?
- Well, if students are being graded in part on whether they have one, then they probably should. If not, and if they're only quoting from lectures or from texts everyone in the course is familiar with, it seems kind of silly to spend time writing a bibliography. Just indicate the text and page number in the body of the paper when citing or paraphrasing.

Again, the requirements of a specific assignment in your course may contradict some of the above responses. If they do not align with your immediate situation and its tasks, consider them food for thought for your future teaching. A skill that one (hopefully) develops in university is a sense of judgement. Prescriptive rules about academic writing tend to inhibit the student writer from developing a sense of authorial judgement, replacing thoughts about what one wants a particular piece of writing to do with thoughts about whether the piece of writing conforms to typographic and stylistic demands—which are in fact often arbitrary, supported only by tradition or instructor preference.

TEACHING THE WRITING PROCESS

We can trace what we now call the writing process and the process approach to teaching writing back to the five "canons" of Classical rhetoric, typically associated with (though not created by) Cicero:

- invention
- arrangement
- style
- memory
- delivery

The last two canons make clear that this list applies more to oratory than to writing, though scholarly attention to the fifth canon has revived as part of the broader interest in "performance." So what follows are all-too-brief discussions of how to help students improve their writing by bringing the canons of invention, arrangement, and style into your tutorial teaching.

Invention

Regarding the thesis: to expect students to have a fully formed thesis before they have started writing the paper ignores the reality of the writing process. Yes, we write purposefully to communicate the ideas we have, but the act of writing is also generative: we've all had the experience of coming up with new arguments or even changing our position entirely through acts of discovery made while writing. To predetermine one's argument is to foreclose on such epistemic opportunities. It is important to write with a research question and a provisional thesis in mind ("In this paper I will . . ."), a rough plan of the paper's major sections (which is more flexible than a paragraph-by-paragraph outline), and a list of points one wants to make at some point and quotations that are likely to be useful. The goal is to have a helpful rough map that will be made more precise as one enters the terrain, as opposed to a rigid structure that will inhibit rather than facilitate discovery.

Sharon Crowley defines invention in the writing process as "any systematic search for, and generation and compilation of, material that can be used to compose a discourse suitable for some rhetorical situation" (*Composition in the University* 208). One of the most common concerns of first-year students is meeting the required page length; they can't fathom being able to write five pages about *anything*. So they widen the margins, they add extra spaces between paragraphs, they write "due to the fact that" instead of "because," and they produce a paper that comes gasping to a conclusion one sentence onto page 5. They have met the letter of the assignment, but it's transparently obvious that the student just didn't have enough material (to use Crowley's term) to produce a five-page paper.

As stated previously, it is erroneous to assert that writing instruction based on usage conventions and typography is teaching "the basics" because those concerns are not the basis of composition. In both classical and contemporary rhetoric, "the basics" of effective prose are not formal outlines or proper sentences or punctuation rules, but invention: creative engagement with a series of strategic topics and questions. Questions like:

- What do I want this paper to do?
- With whom (or toward or against whom) am I trying to do it? That is, who is my audience and who else is involved in this academic conversation?

- What are the challenges—situational, cultural, attitudinal, economic, etc.—to my argument's effectiveness?
- What sorts of genres and strategies—including, yes, formal and stylistic ones—have succeeded before in similar circumstances and/or with similar audiences?

In sum, what do I need to know in order to write this paper? Here is where the teacher-writer comes in—and you, as a TA and a graduate student, are both—demonstrating and helping students with invention and research; with the craft of arrangement, form, and style; and with the process of revision. This approach, this rhetorical terminology, constitutes a re-visioning of tutorial instruction as assisting students with a purposeful and practical craft, rather than as primarily the administration and assessment of assignments according to their adherence to rules.

Not only is invention the defining feature of rhetorical writing instruction, it is the defining feature of a particular attitude toward pedagogy. What is another word for "invent?" Perhaps "make"? Or "create"? The Latin verb *invenio* does not mean "create," but rather "discover," literally "to come upon." The difference between the two meanings of invention, between writing-as-creating and writing-as-discovering, is profound. It is the difference between a belief that effective writing is a private task whose quality is solely determined by one's ability or inability—all the instructor can do is teach forms and grammar to the uncreative have-nots and correct the sorry results—and the belief that effective writing is a teachable, practical, public practice involving a fair amount of mucking around. Invention helps to guide the mucking around. In the Classical canons, invention is followed by arrangement, which seems appropriate; once we have accumulated a wealth of material, we sort through it and make an initial attempt at deploying it purposefully, coherently, and effectively. Note that writing instruction often skips the invention stage and presumes that we can *start* with arrangement: a thesis and an outline with topic sentences, for example. This approach skips the crucial stage of discovering materials to arrange in the first place.

An example of invention: should post-secondary education be free?

Here is an example of what it might look like to teach invention. Let's say students have been studying issues and controversies regarding university access, and now face a writing assignment asking them to address the issue of whether or not post-secondary education in Canada should be free. Note that while there are ethical and philosophical considerations, this is very much a pragmatic, real-world question; it is, in other words, a policy question. As such, it is a topic which presents us with alternative positions: there are many reasonable, well-informed people who think post-secondary education should *not* be free. However, based solely on feelings and personal experiences, many students are likely to say that it should be free; free is better than expensive, after all, especially for a financially strapped university student. The goal of invention is not to make students change their "yes" to "no," though some might. Rather, the goal is to come to recognize the complexity of an emotionally charged issue which may at first seem to have two—and only two—opposing positions, and to at least question one's own position; invention should be an act of fearless questioning. (Note that a topic of inquiry presented as a yes-or-no essay question discourages both invention and cogency. Together with the common insistence that students have—often before they even begin writing their paper—a forceful and unambiguous thesis, yes-or-no questions encourage students to see nuance and contingency—and words such as "sometimes" or "might"—as weak writing, rather than as indications of an informed and non-dogmatic response to a complex issue.)

So how can you help students invent their way toward the sort of nuanced and thorough understanding necessary to make one's "yes," "no," or "it depends" persuasive? One Classical method of deploying invention is through the use of *topoi*, or "topics." Think of topoi as the "places"—as in the word "topography"—where we may go to discover the knowledge we need. Since the practice of rhetorical invention arises from the attitude that knowledge and arguments are publicly accessible, the resources of invention are a commons, and the *topoi* are thus also referred to as "commonplaces." This section refers to just a few of the many *topoi* that would have guided invention in Classical rhetorical pedagogy.

A good place to begin is with the *topos* or topic of **definition**: what terms need defining? For one, the problem itself needs definition, or at least justification. According to a 2021 study by Alex Usher, the price of post-secondary tuition in Canada (minus grants) "is about 4% of median gross family income of the relevant age group, and 8% of that of lone-parent families" (https://higheredstrategy.com/affordability-2021/). Is that cost high enough to warrant raising taxes by the amount necessary to make post-secondary education tuition-free? And when we say "post-secondary education" are we talking about both colleges and universities? What about trade schools and technical colleges? Are we talking about free certificates, micro-credentials, undergraduate degrees, and graduate degrees? For as many years as a student cares to enroll? And is it just tuition that will be free, or are we also arguing for the elimination of charges for things like books, lab fees, health plans, field schools, and the use of campus athletic facilities? Invention is recursive, and the topic of definition will reappear as you continue through other *topoi*.

Two similar Classical commonplaces are **cause and effect** and **means and ends**. Moving from the latter terms back to the former, what are the desired ends of free post-secondary education? What are we after? One obvious answer would be greater access: if higher education were free, admission would not be restricted to only those who could afford it; *anyone* could afford it. Or could they? We now find ourselves circling back to the topic of definition: does "tuition-free" really imply "accessible to all?" Will the latter be the effect of the former? Clearly not, as cost is not the only factor that prevents some people from attending PSIs who might wish to do so: some people have families to care for or other constraints of *time* (as opposed to, or in addition to, constraints of *cost*) that preclude their pursuit of higher education, regardless of cost. Others may not meet the admissions criteria; tuition-free is not the same policy—and will thus not have the same effects—as open admissions.

Our policy question now compels us to address a more philosophical version of the means and ends question: what ends do we believe higher education itself leads to? What positive personal and social effects do we believe are caused or at least facilitated by higher education? (Note that we have again circled back to the topic of definition: what is—in the sense of, what is the purpose of—higher education?) Once we have identified some of the positive effects, we can then ask if higher education is the best or the only means toward increasing access to those desired ends, and if the causal relationship is strong or tenuous. If we are not confident about the ability of higher education to deliver on its promises, then increasing access to higher education by making it free might end up being a massive public expenditure—the money will have to come from somewhere, after all—built on a false or over-stated promise.

While we're on the topic of means and ends, we might invite students to question the *topoi* of means and ends itself. That is, the common conception of higher education—all levels of education, really—is that it leads to, and is preparatory for, something that follows. That something is what makes the preparatory experience purposeful and valuable. But means:ends is just one possible ratio for characterizing the relationship of higher education to the time and space and experiences in which it is embedded. How

might we conceive of the time and effort spent in higher education as something other than preparatory, and how do such different conceptions and ratios affect one's response to the issue of eliminating tuition? If, say, we consider higher education as an end in itself as much as—or instead of—a means to some subsequent end, what other sorts of multi-year experiences might a young person engage in? Some people might experience greater social, psychological, and intellectual transformation spending a year in Delhi than they would spending four years at university. Should such adventures be publicly subsidized?

A subtopic within the *topos* of cause and effect is the question of **unintended effects**, good or ill, of free post-secondary education. How could we possibly know what the unintended effects might be? By looking at the experiences of countries that have already made higher education tuition-free. What have been the positive, negative, and unintended consequences of free higher education in Iran? In Germany? In Russia? If one of our desired ends is to have more indigenous students attend university, has that in fact been the result in countries who instituted free tuition explicitly as the means to that particular end? Have indigenous enrollment and completion rates increased in tuition-free New Zealand, for instance?

Perhaps the most obvious effect of eliminating tuition is that schools will no longer receive tuition dollars. Since that money goes to things like salaries and facilities, schools cannot just do without, and only so much austerity is possible before the quality of the experience declines. So the money has to come from somewhere, and thus do some critics of free higher education define the policy as a regressive tax: low-income citizens who do not attend university are helping to finance free higher education for students of all income levels, including the wealthy. Well, one might think, perhaps we should change the proposed policy to free tuition *only* for those below a certain income. But that is now a completely different policy argument, and in fact a different definition of the issue itself: this is now a call for greatly expanding financial aid, not for making PSE free for everyone. Might a student want to argue for that policy change instead? Such an essay would respond to the question of free higher education not with a simple "yes" or "no," but with: "no, because the most desirable end—greater access regardless of income—can be better achieved by greater government investment in needs-based financial aid."

Note what the process of invention does to students' understanding of research. Rather than citing some random, marginally relevant journal article because the assignment requires students to cite at least three sources, students start to see what kind of research is *needed*, based upon what they come to realize they do not know but must find out if they are to have any credibility on this topic. Research and citation, like form, are thus determined by the writer's purpose rather than by the arbitrary demands of prescriptive expectations.

The topic of **similar and dissimilar**, or of **continuity and discontinuity**, follows from a consideration of cause and effect, and from research into how such initiatives have worked elsewhere: to what extent is New Zealand's or Iran's experience similar and dissimilar to what might result in Canada? We can also, through this lens of similar and dissimilar, compare free higher education to other goods and opportunities; one might argue, "Everyone in Canada has a right to free basic health care, so they should also have a right to free post-secondary education." Does the "so" in that sentence make logical sense? Is the comparison valid? In what ways are health care and higher education similar and dissimilar? What are their respective ends?

One can go on. On the **possible and the impossible**: it is impossible to guarantee free admission to anyone and everyone in Canada who might wish to go to college. So what are the limits of the possible? **Contrast and paradox**: how might free higher education actually *decrease* access to low-income citizens? Perhaps we decide that won't happen, but we can only make that determination after

entertaining the possibility. **Evolutionary vs. revolutionary** change: is free tuition a revolutionary proposal or the evolution of existing policies? Depending on our audience, we may want to emphasize one more than the other, either the policy's radical discontinuity with tuition-based education funding, or its continuity with existing social programs that most citizens are happy with.

Invention is limited only by the length of the class and the size of the chalkboard. And yes: consider doing this as a class-wide activity, on the board. "Can we use these ideas in our papers?" a student will ask incredulously. Yes. That's the whole point of invention—and of writing instruction.

Arrangement

Most of your domestic students will have learned the five-paragraph essay in high school, and it is now time for them to unlearn it. It's a form that no one other than beginning academic writers uses, so to teach it is to ensure that students will not advance or be taken seriously in academic discourse. The five-paragraph essay benefits only the instructor, since it is formulaic and thus easy to grade. But no one actually wants to write or read one. The five-paragraph essay imagines that all topics can be divided into three examples, and that readers have such short attention spans that they need to read the argument twice, once in the introduction and again in the conclusion a few pages later. The three body paragraphs are interchangeable: body paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 can be rearranged as 3, 1, and 2 without altering the coherence of the paper. You can't do that with good writing: arrangement matters. But the five-paragraph form will never produce a good, persuasive paper because the only logical connection it imagines between ideas is "and." The rhetorician Kenneth Burke defines written form as "the arousal and fulfilling of expectations or desires. A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence" (*Counter Statement* 124). A five-paragraph essay leads the reader to anticipate what comes next, but there is no gratification; such is the difference between form and the formulaic. One simple way to get students thinking differently about arrangement is to introduce alternatives to "and." Conjunctions and transitional phrases like "on the other hand," "for example," "in particular" (or "most importantly"), "therefore" (or "as a result"), "nevertheless," and "perhaps" express a range of relationships between ideas, and thus between parts of a paper.

In some social sciences, the IMRaD genre—introduction, methods, results, discussion—is the standard format. (An interesting study of IMRaD's history and rise to dominance can be found here: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC442179). Though rigidly structured, its progression—unlike that of the five-paragraph essay—is methodical and purposeful; its form serves its function, and fulfills the readers' expectations and desires.

Whatever your subject area, arrangement needs to be recognized as purposeful and situational rather than as prescriptive and decontextualized. Since the students in your tutorials will be writing within a disciplinary context and thus within a specific disciplinary genre, you have readily at hand a plenitude of examples: published papers in your discipline. Certainly, students are not expected to write at that level, but a close analysis of the genre's formal characteristics can guide students toward an understanding of the discipline's expectations and of how to fulfil them. Discuss how a published paper moves from paragraph to paragraph, or section to section, and why. As you review with the students a paper you have asked them to read in advance, ask such questions as:

- Why does the author begin this way?
- Why do they start a new paragraph here?

- What is the logical connection between this paragraph and the previous one?
- What claim is this example (or quotation, or table) supporting?
- How does the author handle competing analyses, theories, readings, studies, etc.?
- What terms are defined, where, and why?

You may also, with the student's permission, review with the class a particularly strong paper submitted for a course assignment. Project the paper page by page on the screen in your classroom and discuss what it does well, and how its arrangement enhances its argument and effectiveness. Students tend to appreciate examples of papers, and you may ask your instructor if they have such examples from the past that you can use in your tutorials. (Note that these would also require the student's permission and should be kept anonymous for privacy reasons.)

Style

Perhaps the most common way we notice and interact with students' writing style is through the attitude that linguist Deborah Cameron calls "verbal hygiene:" the belief that certain forms of usage demand cleansing. Thus do we react with outrage, red pen in hand, to "they should of known better," "with the professor and I," "could care less," inelegant contractions like must've or it'll (or any use of contractions), an incorrect usage of its/it's or effect/affect, etc. The verbal hygienist's list is endless, and we are all at times hygienists. But importantly, our opinions about various verbal infractions are variable, even eccentric: I don't really care if students use affect/effect incorrectly, but may God have mercy on their souls if they write "wrecks havoc," or "begs the question" when what they mean is "raises the question." Some self-awareness of the hygienist within is important, and should guide responses to students' writing styles. Stylistic advice needs to be grounded in the writer's purpose and the reader's expectations, not in the marker's tastes and preferences.

This is not to say that style is only a matter of individual sensibilities. Consider this sentence:
Due to the fact that certain breeds of domesticated canines shed their fur while others do not shed their fur, those that don't shed may be preferable for people who suffer from allergic reactions when they come into close contact with certain kinds of animal fur in their home.

The author may think—not without some justification, mind you—that "academic writing" means verbose and dull. Or this author may be trying to meet the word requirement for the assignment. Or both. If this flatulent style is consistent throughout the paper, it may deserve to be the subject of one of your final comments. There you will take pen in hand to rewrite the sentence to something like: "People who are allergic to dog hair may prefer a breed that doesn't shed." (With the sentence thus stripped of its excesses, you might also point out that this observation is so obvious that it can probably go entirely without saying.) While published academic articles may provide useful examples of arrangement and discipline-specific forms of argumentation and support, they do not necessarily provide positive examples of style. Although academics write often, we do not all write well. So be sure to choose your examples carefully.

APPENDIX B: TEACHING AS "BOOTSTRAPPING"

Here as elsewhere, discuss with your instructor whether this is something they want you to do before you invest your time creating content for your tutorial. There need to be hours in your TUG set aside for preparing such materials and activities. Bootstrapping is one way to plan out a class which you have taught numerous times that is particularly useful for classes that refuse to engage despite your best efforts. This one focuses on a trajectory over the course of the term, rather than just mixing methods inside the tutorial.

In the first few tutorial sessions of a semester, you focus on simply explaining and summarizing lecture content in a relatively comprehensive manner, rather than trying to induce student participation. To keep your advanced students interested in your summaries, you can incorporate some nuanced details that may have only been briefly introduced in previous lectures. This allows your advanced students to expand upon their knowledge. To help those students that are struggling (or those students who do not have English as their primary language), you can develop expedient forms of summarization, incorporate visual aids and analogies, use schematic drawings (on the chalkboard or whiteboard) to delineate an argument's structure, and present vivid examples to clarify abstract notions.

As the semester progresses, the amount of time performing pure summarizations lessens, and you very quickly transition towards a tutorial structure that is part summarization (the "bootstrapping" phase) and partly exploration of the content that was just summarized. Depending upon the specific details of a tutorial session, the time spent bootstrapping versus the time spent exploring can vary. For those students that find the syllabus articles and lectures challenging, they can rest assured that every tutorial will dedicate some time towards bootstrapping them into having a baseline comprehension of important and relevant lecture concepts. From there, given that bootstrapping has occurred, those same struggling students can now sidestep many "what" type questions and instead start to ask the more interesting and mentally rewarding "why" and "how" type questions.

When bootstrapping students, try to make your summaries condensed and comprehensive, as this gives them "momentum"—i.e., there are no awkward pauses or unnecessary moments of silence. The summary information will come with some amount of intensity and flow, but not at the sacrifice of clarity. Pause and ask to see if anyone is confused and clarify any points that need more detail.

When you reach the exploratory phase of a tutorial session, the level of student participation increases even more so than during bootstrapping. You will often get questions directed at you in succession, but more interesting is the cross-talk between students themselves. This cross-talk is very good for a tutorial environment. This cross-talk comes more easily because all students have by now been bootstrapped into a (relatively) level field of comprehension, and this boosts a student's *confidence* of being able to articulate lecture concepts—and also articulate questions on those concepts (such as critical questions about an argument's assumptions)—and this confidence eases the cross-talk between students, and also with the TA.

Some pros of this method are that over time, students become more familiar with the basic content. They are more willing and able to take part in discussion. Over time, they ask more advanced "why" questions instead of "what" questions. The cons of this method are that it requires you already know how you'd like to work out the whole semester. It means there is little room for trying new things with your students and little room for discussion early on.

An example of how to bootstrap a tutorial in philosophy: One efficient way to summarize philosophical arguments is by reconstructing them from the first-personal perspective of the original author. This converts a standard-format philosophical argument (by "standard" I mean something like the premise-conclusion format)—which can be a rather abstract thing to understand for many students, especially since most have never taken philosophy before—into a more intelligible mental "journey" that involves facing philosophical obstacles and overcoming them.

As an example of this first-personal reconstruction approach, consider the task of summarizing Descartes' cosmological argument. I find it useful to put myself in Descartes' shoes and imagine that I am stuck in (the obstacle of) Cartesian skepticism. I then *think-out-loud* about how I would consider the various anti-skeptical options available to me (as Descartes). When I verbally run through those anti-skeptical options, I might consider and reject some options that will not work (from Descartes' perspective), but I will eventually consider the correct option(s), namely the one(s) discussed by the lecturer and Descartes himself. Because I am verbalizing my mental journey between these incorrect and correct options, many students—many of whom have never taken philosophy before—can gain an intuitive grasp of what Descartes was trying to achieve with his cosmological argument. These students can gain an understanding of why some anti-skeptical options will not work, while others will. When students "travel" through the mental journey that Descartes had (or rather, the journey that I am pedagogically assuming Descartes had), they can more easily appreciate Descartes' argumentative proposal, even if they ultimately disagree with him.

Once I have bootstrapped students into some baseline content, I then move into the exploratory phase of the tutorial. This phase can either start right away with an invitation for questions from students, or it can start with me thinking-out-loud again (i.e., thinking about the implications of what was previously summarized in the bootstrapping phase). As a think-out-loud, I might ask for students to help fill in some details of a philosophical topic that I am investigating.

For example, suppose that I already summarized Descartes' cosmological argument. Also suppose that in the prior week, the lecturer talked about some problematic assumptions found in Descartes' cosmological argument. I could just summarize what the lecturer said about those assumption, but it is more engaging if I investigate them by thinking-out-loud in a pseudo- exploratory fashion. During this exploratory phase in my tutorial, I do not have to supply students with all of the relevant details for a full comprehension of why these assumptions are said to be problematic. Instead, I can ask students to help me fill in some of the information as I (verbally) think through this topic. Essentially, I am construing students to be, so to speak, on the "same team" as myself while I ponder lecture content. Given that I bootstrapped my tutorial with some baseline information about Descartes' cosmological argument, many students can now supply me with the correct information as to why some of Descartes' assumptions seem to be problematic. Without the bootstrapping, my thinking-out-loud might just appear to be obscure and useless nonsense from the perspective of various students. Doing this type of "team" thinking-out-loud activity can make the tutorial session more interactive and lively, and this makes it more comfortable for students to naturally ask their own questions about course content.

APPENDIX C: TUTORIALS IN Q-COURSES

Tutorials are a bit different for Q-courses than for W- and B-courses, though there will still be discussion. In a Q tutorial, engagement is more often marked by practice than by dialogue. Typically, a Q lecture covers the concepts and theory behind a method. A Q tutorial gives students the chance to practice and play with those methods. Below are a number of useful parts of a Q tutorial and reasons for including them. You should feel free to mix and match these parts to construct a tutorial method you find helpful for your students.

The importance of a handout: In a Q tutorial, the handout is king. On your handout, you should put any main concepts/rules they learned in the past week. You should also write out each question you plan to cover or have them cover. Try to keep the format of your handout the same throughout the term. Consistency and systematicity are vital to teaching quantitative material. Students need to know where all of their information is going to be. Reference the handout as you work through the class examples.

Make sure everything that the students need to actually do the problems is on your handout. It also helps to make your reasoning clear using the handout. For example, you could tell them your reasoning process like this: "I know in this deduction that I'm trying to prove a material conditional. If I'm proving a conditional, I should be using conditional proof. Let's take a look at (2b) on the 'Things to Recall' portion of your handout. That's the rule for CP and some tips about using it. One of the tips is to suppose the antecedent of the thing I'm trying to prove. Now we can continue with this in mind." Make reference to the rules as you use them in an example. Make reference to the rules as the students are working on their own problems. Teach them how to use the worksheet as a tool.

Things to recall: The first section of your tutorial should be a very quick review of what has been covered in lecture that the students will be employing in practice today. Include any rules, definitions, methods, and tips vital to actually solving problems. Having this info on your handout keeps the students from wasting time searching through books or notes. It also allows you easy access for referencing rules as you explain your reasoning.

A class-wide example: It is often useful to do one or two examples on the board. This helps to reduce the error rate when students start doing their own problems. You should spend a maximum of 15 minutes doing this. You don't necessarily need to ask them to participate or tell you what to do next. This is a time for you to explicitly reveal all of your reasoning, in line with the handout's "Things to Recall," so that they can think in that manner while they do problems themselves. At the end, ask if they have any questions about what you did. Choosing what example to do on the board is a balance. You should select an example that highlights some of the trickier parts of the material. But you also want one that is fairly short (so it fits on the board and is easily covered in a short time).

Do it yourself: The next portion of the tutorial should be focused on the students doing practice problems. You should include a number of problems on your handout for them to do by themselves. If they're just doing straightforward problems (find the median, give a deduction, use some theory to solve X, etc.), then you might choose 6-8 problems of increasing difficulty. Try to equally represent the new methods in both the easy and hard problems. For example, you don't want all the questions asking about medians to be wrapped up in difficult problems. You want all the students to have some practice with each of the concepts and methods.

During this portion of the tutorial, you should be circulating around the room. Don't just wait for them to ask questions. Review their work as they're doing it and ask them how they got there. When they do something incorrectly, press the students to explain their reasoning. Identify what led them astray and remind them (often using your "Things to Recall" section!) what the correct method is. You know how to reason through a problem. Don't just tell them how to solve it or how you think about it. Ask them questions that will lead them through your thinking. Always be moving through the tutorial room.

Note that the above design of a Q tutorial also applies for writing exercises: introduce it, model it, and have the students practice it. The second step is often neglected but is critically important. More on this below in the discussion of writing pedagogy.

Reviewing questions: Some TAs and instructors like if you go over the answers to the "Do it Yourself" problems in tutorial. The downside to this is that it often takes a lot of time away from the student's practicing. It also means that they might just copy down the answers instead of thinking it through themselves. Instead, consider sending the answers to students via email or Canvas after tutorials for that week. That way you ensure that students are working through the problems in tutorial and that they get the correct answers afterward. Another method is to review one problem of the students' choosing at the end of tutorial.

Groupwork: In Q tutorials, groupwork can be somewhat awkward since they're probably not meant to be debating an issue or discussing a position. There are some ways to make it useful, though. When working through problems you can ask them to explain their reasoning process to their partner. Or have them talk through the way they want to solve the problem together. Having them collaborate this way helps them solve the difficult problems of your handout.

Your attitude: A lot of doing a Q tutorial is explaining your reasoning. But another important part is your attitude as you do it. Stay engaged and connect with what excites you in the material. Tell the students when they've done a beautiful deduction. Let them know you're having fun, and maybe they will too. As you guide them through a problem, you should be asking them questions (see above on asking questions as a guide). When they answer correctly, get excited! When they answer incorrectly, don't get frustrated. Simply try to re-explain the method and rules. Try explaining it in a different way. Don't forget to congratulate the students on its successes, even if they don't seem like the biggest successes to you. Acknowledging students when they work hard is one of the most important rewards you can give them.

APPENDIX D: IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS

A percentage of the total course grade is often devoted to work done in tutorial, and the instructor may give TAs license to do what they want with this percentage. Many TAs decide to have students do presentations. Presentations usually work better for second-year courses and above, in part because the students are more engaged with the material and more comfortable with the tutorial environment. Presentations in first-year tutorials are not an inherently bad idea, and your instructor may even require them. But they need modelling and clear criteria, so you do not end up with the presenting student reading miserably from a script like a POW giving a forced confession, and all the other students (and you) bored out of their minds. And since students tend to reproduce the first presentation given, it's important to establish a strong precedent.

The process for teaching any new skill is: explain it, model it, and have the students practice it. To explain it, you want a handout that clearly states the purpose, expectations, and duration of the presentations, whether and how sources are to be used, the role of video or images, evaluation criteria, and clarity as to whether students are to be explaining some content or giving their opinion about it. Then you yourself should model a presentation before any of the students do, setting an example of what an effective presentation looks like. If you want students to pose discussion questions, model for them an effective discussion question: for one thing, it is not so lengthy and complex that no one can even understand what's being asked. Also advise that students incorporate their questions throughout the presentation, rather than asking several in a rush at the end.

To make presentations work best, keep them short and be sure to include buffer time between presentations; don't do five ten-minute presentations back-to-back. A five to ten-minute presentation will usually be much more successful than anything longer. Make it clear that you will time presentations and be prepared to give students warnings as they approach their end time. Another benefit of a five-minute presentation is that the stakes are lowered for the students.

Your instructor should provide you with evaluation criteria for presentations if the instructor requires presentations; if not, here is a sample set:

- Substance (50%): Demonstrated understanding of the main content of the case(s), issue(s), and positions
- Class discussion (30%): Quality of class discussion questions and facilitation of discussion
- Presentation skills (20%): Assessment of the student's organization and delivery of the material

Also consider basing part of each student's presentation mark on their engagement with *other* student's presentations: asking or answering questions and being attentive listeners.

Presentations can be difficult to make work, but if you make them seem approachable and make the expectations clear they can be a really rewarding part of the class and a good jumping off point for larger discussions. Like your students, you will get out of in-class presentations what you put into them.

APPENDIX E: CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM CULTURE

FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Students come into our classes with different degrees of language fluency, different personal and cultural expectations about learning, participation, and student-teacher dynamics, various sorts of learning disabilities that require accommodation, etc. We want to do our best to create a learning experience in which all have the opportunity to succeed. Here are some suggestions in this regard.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a practice that consciously attempts to build accessibility and flexibility into all classroom and teaching strategies. If you are interested in learning more about UDL, you may you may find this short document helpful:
https://www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity/learningenvironments/resource-library/resources/universal-design-for-learning.html

SFU's Teaching and Learning Centre defines an inclusive classroom as:
a classroom in which all students and instructors feel safe—physically and emotionally—and welcome to contribute ideas, views, and concerns. In an inclusive classroom, content is selected from a broad range of sources and is presented through a variety of teaching methods. Everyone in the class is responsible for contributing to the inclusive classroom by asking questions, challenging assumptions, and allowing for mistakes to be made.

Each person's approach to creating and facilitating inclusive classrooms will necessarily reflect individual intersectionality and experiences. The following section outlines general guidelines; however, inclusivity relates to both the TA's and the students' experiences, so you may consider additional items that reflect your personal experiences and those of your students. CEE provides some strategies to help create an inclusive classroom:

- Recognize barriers that might keep a student from participating in tutorial; for example, if you (or student presenters) use videos, see that they include closed captioning to ensure that students who are hard of hearing can follow along and participate meaningfully. Give consideration to physical barriers that might impede a student's access to a seat in the tutorial room. For example, if you have students with physical impairments, consider organizing the room in a format that allows students to move around safely.
- Note that SFU's Centre for Accessible Learning (https://www.sfu.ca/students/accessible-learning.html) provides the instructor with accommodation request letters, so contact the instructor directly with all of your accommodation-related questions. Recognize the confidentiality of students' academic accommodations by requesting students meet with you or the instructor during office hours to discuss their accommodations privately to avoid drawing unnecessary attention to the student's accommodations during tutorial.
- During discussions, strive for variety in your cultural reference points or ask for examples from your students to maintain diversity: "would anyone like to share a different perspective?"

- Moderate discussions to ensure everyone has a turn to both contribute their opinions and perspectives and be active listeners, though respect/offer a "pass" wherever applicable.
- Around the midpoint of the semester, you may wish to give students the opportunity to provide you with anonymous and constructive written feedback about the structure of the tutorials. Respond to the students' feedback and communicate whether you will be making changes based on their feedback.

SFU's Health and Counselling office (https://www.sfu.ca/students/health) provides additional suggestions for promoting inclusivity in the classroom, including learning more about the intercultural awareness resources that are available from SFU, and encouraging students to attend office hours to discuss accessibility issues they are experiencing in the classroom. See also the excellent resources for wellbeing in the classroom here: http://www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity/learningenvironments/resource-library.html

FOSTERING CIVILITY IN THE CLASSROOM

CEE describes civility in the classroom as requiring "students and instructors [to] respond to sensitive subject matter with sensitivity and compassion and refrain from disruptive behaviour." Here are some strategies you can incorporate to help promote civility in your tutorial, based in the belief that "often prevention is the best strategy for avoiding disruptive behaviour":

- Ask the students to identify their expectations of you, their Teaching Assistant. Be open to what they suggest; often, their suggestions are quite reasonable and when they are not, you can use their suggestion as a "teachable moment" to explain why you cannot meet their expectation in that area. Transparency in teaching decisions contributes to a positive classroom culture.
- Have a group discussion to set out clear expectations and ground rules. Discuss and outline your expectations as they pertain to attendance, respectful participation, deadlines, formality, feedback, and the use of technology in the classroom. Be clear in explaining your expectations. Make sure you involve the students and have them share their expectations of one another in the classroom. This is particularly important for establishing their expectations for appropriate classroom behavior, including dialogue on controversial topics. Consider providing students with an additional opportunity to anonymously write down their feedback and submit it at the end of tutorial.
- In "Empowering Students to Create Safety in the Classroom" (2016), Sheri Fabian and Katherine Rossiter provide additional guidance for how to develop classroom engagement guidelines to promote safety in the classroom with your students. Suggestions include:

  o Be respectful, non-judgmental, open-minded, inclusive, empathetic.
  o Be mindful of body language, tone, language
  o Be cautious about assumptions/stereotypes – never assume a student does or does not have first-hand experience with the subject matter. Maintain confidentiality of others.
  o As you are completing the course readings for each week, note controversial materials and try to think of ways in which you will deal with the sensitive content within the tutorial setting should a difficult moment arise.

While you can do your best to prevent conflict in the classroom by creating clear expectations, including expectations about respectful participation, conflict sometimes arises in the tutorial setting. Ask your course instructor at the start of the term whether they have any guidelines for you to follow in dealing with sensitive content or insensitive comments that students make during these discussions.

Lee Warren (2007) of Harvard University's Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning wrote about "Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom" (https://eloncdn.blob.core.windows.net/eu3/sites/126/2017/04/Managing-Hot-Moments-in-the-Classroom-Harvard_University.pdf). Warren writes, "knowing strategies for turning difficult encounters into learning opportunities enables us to address important, but hot, topics—religion, politics, race, class, gender—in our classroom discussions" (1). Warren provides examples of strategies instructors can use to help students think about, and work through, hot moments:

- As noted in the previous section, establish ground rules for discussion and emphasize the importance of being open to multiple perspectives and encourage students to engage in respectful and responsible dialogue.
- Frame an inappropriate comment made by a student in a different way by "saying something like: 'Many people think this way. Why do they hold such views? What are their reasons?' and then, 'Why do those who disagree hold other views?'" (3).
- Encourage students to learn each other's perspectives by having them ask questions of each other and later argue for a different position than their own.
- Use the hot moment as a topic for a short written reflection to be completed during tutorial. This might require having the students take the position they disagree with.
- In some circumstances it might be appropriate to speak to students who were most involved in the hot moment on their own to "help them to learn something substantive from the experience—about themselves, about others, about possible solutions, about the topic as a whole, and about how to voice their thoughts so that they can be heard, even by those who disagree" (3).
- Be mindful of how the students respond to the hot moment and acknowledge that it is okay for students to leave class if they need to. Ask the students to email you or drop by your or the course instructor's office hours if you can be of additional assistance.
- Warren explains that not addressing hot moments can negatively affect your ability to foster inclusivity and civility in the classroom. Your silence in response to inappropriate comments can be taken as informal support of those beliefs.

DECOLONIAL APPROACHES TO TA PEDAGOGIES

By Britt Amell, Carleton University

This section is for you if you are interested in adopting a decolonial approach to your TA work but are not sure what that means or where to start.

Starting with the self
Avoid a tokenistic approach to decolonization:

- If you have four minutes: Review the Key Terms list and suggested working definitions provided at the end of this section.
- If you have 15 minutes each week: Select a few terms from the list and research them on your own. Identify what you would add to the definitions or the list of terms. You could start by visiting SFPIRG's blog post on Truth-telling and decolonization or by accessing some of the resources listed on this page from SFU's Library.
- If you have a few minutes each day: Think about why you're decolonizing and for who. This helps to avoid perpetuating the use of the term as a buzzword and checklist item, which in turn helps to avoid causing further harm that accompany tokenistic approaches. Understand that decolonization is not a checklist item on a list of things to do—it requires meaningful engagement and steps along a path that is more of a journey than it is a single event or destination.
- If you have an orange shirt: September 30 is National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a day dedicated to honouring the Indigenous children who were sent away to residential schools in Canada, and to learning more about the history of the residential school system. Review the summary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's reports and their 94 Calls to Action by visiting https://nctr.ca/records/reports/

Learn about land acknowledgements and how to engage with them in an authentic way:

- If you have two minutes: Figure out whose land you are on by visiting https://native-land.ca/ and https://www.sfu.ca/communicators-toolkit/guides/editorial-style-guide/territorial-acknowledgements.html. Learn how to pronounce the names of Indigenous communities and organizations in BC by reviewing this guide prepared by the BC provincial government.
- If you have four minutes: Watch this land acknowledgement clip from the Baroness Von Sketch Show for a comedic take on how land acknowledgements frequently become scripted words we glaze over rather than meaningfully engage with.
- If you have more time: Write your own land acknowledgement. Begin by visiting the Library's webpage on SFU's land acknowledgements. Explore the Library's workshop page on positionality statements and land acknowledgements and work through some of the activities and suggestions there.

Learn how to engage in and foster meaningful conversations:

- If you have five minutes: Find opportunities on campus to learn more and engage in meaningful dialogue. For instance, https://olc.sfu.ca/topic/community/indigenous offers a round-up of blog posts covering a range of topics relevant to the broader aim of decolonization.
- If you have a few minutes each week: Review SFU's Library page dedicated to Indigenizing Curriculum and follow up on some of the suggested resources. Read the Report of the SFU Aboriginal Reconciliation Council

Moving to the tutorial space: Suggestions for activities and practices

- Engage in critical self-reflection and examine your assumptions about students' writing: What is it that you expect students should be able to do in their writing? Why? Who benefits?
- Review and complete SFU's inclusive and anti-racist writing exercises at https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc/writing/inclusive-antiracist-writing/exercises
- Draw on multiple modes of writing (e.g., blogging, journaling, weekly commentaries on readings, in-class freewriting activities).
- Try *Inkshedding*: Inkshedding refers to an activity in which students are first asked to either bring in writing (perhaps writing you have assigned) or to freewrite (perhaps on a shared experience). Once students have had an opportunity to freewrite, the freewritten texts are passed around the classroom for reading. Readers are asked to "mark with a vertical line in the margin passages in which the writer said something 'striking,' something that seemed to them interesting or new or outrageous" (Hunt, n.d.). When everyone has had a chance to comment, or the allotted time has run out, arrange the texts on a wall for readers to take a look at.
- Try *peer conferencing*: Students meet in small groups to discuss their work. You can have students meet several times throughout the course, and use the groups as a way to support students anywhere along the writing arc (e.g., from conceptualising ideas, drafts, to peer reviewing/inkshedding).
- Try to practice *listening* to students talk about experiences with writing, especially because these experiences can reveal the embedded and hidden ways in which colonialism, Eurocentrism, and Whiteness become embroiled and implicated in our academic writing.
- Try adopting a *transformative approach to teaching*: Transformative approaches to teaching view differences as resources, rather than as deficits, and see students and teachers in more of a dialogue with differences contributing to learning on both sides (Canagarajah, 2002; Freire, 1970/2015). If you are interested in learning more, you might start with reading the introduction to Canagarajah's (2002) book on Critical Academic Writing.
- Try to co-create *a transformative tutorial space*: While you should still focus on helping students to engage with and appreciate the readings and knowledge developed in class, you can also use your tutorial space to explore alternatives (Canagarajah, 2002). Creating space for students to negotiate and appropriate academic discourses "in their own terms would enable students to reconstruct established textual practices and infuse them with oppositional values and meanings" (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 15). Activities that encourage students to explore alternative interpretations of an article, concept or idea might be one way to do this. Another would be to guide students in a discussion that considers the readings, concepts, or ideas from different angles and points of view—for instance, variations on questions regarding "who benefits" and "who is missing" can often function as starting points for discussing a range of topics. Remember, though, that the instructor determines the content of the course, assignments, and exams, decides how assignments are to be evaluated and graded, and decides what to include in the course and what to leave out, in terms of both content and opinions.

List of Key Terms and Working Definitions

- **Cognitive imperialism:** Refers to the tendency to privilege and empower certain forms of knowledge (typically Eurocentric) which become normative, while suppressing, marginalising, and discrediting other forms of knowledge. It is, as Battiste (1998) says, a process that "not only tries to perpetuate but enacts the kinds of thinking it welcomes, [and] discards and/or discredits the kind it fears" (p. 21).

- **Colonial matrix of power:** Arguably forms the foundation for *colonialism and *settler colonialism (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Describes the ongoing effects of colonialism, as well as its model and process which includes the structuring and control of labour, resources, and culture (Mignolo, 2007; Patel, 2014; Quijano, 2000). Also referred to as the "settler-colonial triad" to highlight the nuanced relationship between whiteness, white privilege, colonialism, and chattelism (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

- **Colonialism:** Refers to the "process of cultural domination and intellectual indoctrination through the imposition of the European worldview" (Mazama, 1995, p. 763). A set of practices supported by institutions, vocabularies, and scholarship (Smith, 2012). Similar to *settler colonialism and Imperialism which has, at its base, a persistent desire for replication and permanency (Barker, 2009; Smith, 2012). What it is not: a single event in history.

- **Decolonization:** Oppositional to *colonialism and *settler colonialism (Sium, Desai, & Ritskes, 2012). There are different ideas about what decolonization involves but most agree to some extent that Indigenous sovereignty and land are, or should be, at the heart (Tuck & Yang, 2012). The re-envisioning of a new and different future (Sium et al., 2012). What it is not: A metaphor.

- **Ethnocentrism:** the delusion that one's ethnic group, culture, and way of life is superior to another. Strongly affiliated with *Eurocentrism, as well as with racism, *whiteness and *white privilege (Fals-Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2003; Mazama, 1995).

- **Eurocentric or Eurocentrism:** Strongly affiliated with *Ethnocentrism, as well as *whiteness and *white privilege (Fals-Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2003; Mazama, 1995). Pokhrel (2011) has defined Eurocentrism as a "phenomenon that views the histories and cultures of non-Western societies from a European or Western perspective" whereby "'the West,' functions as a universal signifier in that it assumes the superiority of European cultural values over those of non-European societies" (p. 321).

- **Indigenization:** A response that empowers "Indigenous self-determination, address[es] decolonization, and reconcile[s] systemic and societal inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians" (Pidgeon, 2016, p. 77). What it is not: A tokenized checkmark on a list; the toleration of Indigenous knowledge(s) and practices (Pidgeon, 2016).

- **Practice(s), Social:** The concept of "practice" or "social practice" has many interpretations. At the core, social practices can refer to a set (or sets) of habitualised bodily performances and mental activities. "Practices" are the elusive yet "routinized ways of understanding the world, of desiring something, of knowing how to do something" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 251). Similar to conventions, practices are often tacit expectations that govern (or attempt to) how we behave, know, act and carry out actions or tasks in specific social situations. A practice is "thus a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described, and the world is understood (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250).

- **Reconciliation:** The ongoing collective process that entails following through on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (2015) calls to action. A mutually respectful relationship that requires coming to terms with past events, as well as accepting responsibility for one's part in the

process of healing, truth-telling, listening, witnessing, and justice (TRC, 2015). It requires mutually respectful relationships, where *mutual* requires reciprocity, *respectful* requires humility and acknowledgement of each parties' achievements or abilities as achievements in their own right, and *relationships* require connection, a multi-directional linking between two or more people, ideas, concepts, and or objects.

- **Settler colonialism:** Settler colonialism differs from colonialism. In settler colonial contexts, the land is central to the pursuit of settler homemaking (Tuck & Yang, 2012, 2014; Patel, 2014). This homemaking insists upon "settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain" and this agenda is used to justify what ends up being a targeted displacement, replacement and erasure of Indigenous peoples (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). Canada, among other countries, is a settler colony (Tuck & Yang, 2014). It's helpful to think of settler colonialism, whiteness, white privilege, Eurocentrism and heteropatriarchy as *structures rather than sole events.

- **Settler(s):** Non-Indigenous folk who form part of the "European descended socio-political majority" (Vowel, 2016, p. 16). Sometimes overlaps with whiteness and white privilege.

- **Structure:** A recurring pattern comprising social behaviours and actions. Similar to *practice.

- **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC]:** The TRC was a group charged with the task of documenting and sharing the history and impacts of the residential school system. The commission concluded formally in 2015 and issued 95 calls to action (TRC, 2015).

- **White privilege:** Similar to whiteness; the advantages that go along with whiteness (MacMullan, 2015).

- **Whiteness:** That which often goes unnamed, is difficult (for white people) to see and accept, the myth of racelessness which is a sense that one and one's perspective on issues of race are not themselves raced (Hartmann, Gerteis, & Kroll, 2009; Hooley, 2009; MacMullan, 2015). Ahmed (2012) argues for the consideration of institutional whiteness, where "diversity" initiatives are almost always about bringing the 'Other' into a predominately white institution that does not accept or acknowledge its attachment to this (if they did, diversity initiatives wouldn't be needed, institutions would just *be diverse*). Whiteness can be associated with an ontological, ideological, axiological, and epistemological orientation that promotes a habitual forgetting of one's race (Gusa, 2010; MacMullan, 2015).

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APPENDIX F: SOME BEHAVIORAL DIFFICULTIES TAS MAY ENCOUNTER

There are some issues TAs may face that faculty—especially male faculty—do not. The two most frequent are:

- a greater difficulty in establishing yourself as an authority
- inappropriate behavior from students (in a variety of forms)

It is worth noting that such challenges may disproportionately, though not exclusively, involve TAs who present as other than white, cis-gendered men. So you should not assume that classroom management issues you may encounter are "your fault." To be sure, the teacher has a role in co-creating an atmosphere of respect, and there is always room for improvement in all aspects of our teaching. But one should try to avoid the rollercoaster of elation and self-criticism that can attend our teaching experiences; the positive experiences are not all to our credit, and the negative ones are not entirely our fault.

If some behavior occurs which is uncomfortable for you and the others, you may think that you should just put up with it in order to not detract from the education of the other students. Resist this thought. A student's toxic behavior is problematic for everyone, as other students will feel uncomfortable witnessing it. They also become less inclined to participate for fear of the problematic student attacking them next. So it is in your best interest and the best interest of your students to at least attempt to quell this behavior. If problems persist, consider telling the instructor who has the ultimate authority and responsibility in these matters. Here are some strategies worth trying which may help mitigate these problems.

If the inappropriate behavior is directed toward another student—cutting them down when they speak in class, interrupting them, dismissing their contributions, etc.—you can help alleviate the problems to some extent by bringing attention back to what the other person said, reiterating their point or highlighting what was helpful or insightful about it. If the behavior is directed at you, you are entirely within your rights to speak to the instructor, to another faculty ally, and/or to other TAs. Sometimes just getting the opportunity to describe the situation and hear that, indeed, you are not doing anything wrong can help you maintain a healthier perspective on these kinds of encounters. It is tough when a student fails to acknowledge you as an authority, or simply as someone deserving of respect. But remember that even the problematic students are students, and our job is to teach them all as they show up in our classes. Sexism, for example, is a kind of irrationality. So one way to frame such expression pedagogically is to consider how you can make students better reasoners by helping them challenge and evaluate their own reflexive behavior and background beliefs.

The cases which are most likely to be resolvable come from students who are not aware that they are being problematic. For instance, they may be constantly interrupting you and other students, yet feel like they are not monopolizing class time. You may be able to remedy the situation in class by diligently sticking to an "only talk when called upon" rule and by saying, "I'm going to give students an opportunity to contribute who haven't shared their perspectives yet. It doesn't mean I don't want to hear from all of you who have already contributed, I want to hear from as many students as possible and I'll loop back to you next time." If the problem continues, it may be necessary to let the student know kindly but clearly—but not in front of everyone else—that they are disrupting the educational experience of the class. (See "some common types of participants and how to work with them," page 25.)

DEALING WITH BLATANTLY AND PERSONALLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Policy is your friend, and SFU has clear policies regarding student conduct (http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student/s10-05.html) and harassment and bullying: http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/general/gp47.html. Though uncommon, there are generally two ways such behaviors manifest. The first way is an obviously inappropriate act. For instance, a student may invite a TA to go on a date. This should be handled directly by telling the student it's inappropriate and emailing the course instructor immediately. The other way is more discrete. Examples include students who shut the door in your office hours to talk more intimately, casually mention your appearance, ask overly personal questions, or stand too close when you talk to them. Keep in mind that you are a professional teacher in a professional environment. This means you have a legally protected right to a harassment-free workplace. One way of handling this is by setting clear boundaries. Let the student know that what they did was inappropriate for the situation or because of constitutive features of the student/teacher relationship. Sometimes this is all it takes. However, some students will fail to recognize boundaries, and the TA has a range of resources for dealing with this. In some cases, TAs may not want to deal with such students directly, and fortunately they don't have to: the instructor, the graduate chair, or the department chair are available to notify the student that this incident is not merely innocent or harmless. The university and your department are motivated to have your back, so you do not have to go it alone. If at any time you feel intimidated by a student or are in any potentially dangerous situation in the classroom, immediately contact Security at 1-778-782 4500. If a student is harassing you or another student or if you feel discrimination is taking place, contact either Bullying and Harassment (BH) Central Hub https://www.sfu.ca/bullying-harassment.html or the Human Rights Office (HRC) https://www.sfu.ca/humanrights.html. Both offices provide free and confidential support and advice. The BH Central Hub will direct be able to determine whether the harassment claim should involve the HRO, and will facilitate connection with their office in such cases. Harassing emails should likewise be referred to the course instructor, and the BH Central Hub or the HRO.

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE TERMINOLOGY FOR EVALUATION OF PAPERS

This is a useful taxonomy for guiding the evaluation of, and response to, student writing at any level. The six items are listed more or less in order of importance.

Cogency
The force and insight of the paper's argument or analysis
<u>Strong</u>: The paper's argument or analysis is insightful, vigorous, and potentially compelling.
<u>Acceptable</u>: The paper's argument or analysis is plausible, clear, and consistent.
<u>Weak</u>: The argument or analysis is implausible, unclear, incomplete, or inconsistent.

Support
The extent to which the paper's assertions are supported with examples, evidence, or reasoning that are appropriate for the subject and the intended audience
<u>Strong</u>: The argument or analysis receives full and convincing support.
<u>Acceptable</u>: The argument or analysis receives credible support.
<u>Weak</u>: The argument or analysis receives inadequate, unconvincing, or irrelevant support.

Control
The organizational quality of the paper, both in terms of its overall structure and of its individual paragraphs
<u>Strong</u>: The paper is well-structured: its form at all levels contributes to its purpose.
<u>Acceptable</u>: The paper is generally well-structured, with few flaws in its overall organization or paragraphing.
<u>Weak</u>: The paper is poorly structured; organizational flaws undermine its effectiveness.

Addressing the Issue
The extent to which the paper explores the issue set forth in the assignment and addresses all aspects of the writing task
<u>Strong</u>: The paper thoroughly explores the complexities of the issue.
<u>Acceptable</u>: The paper addresses the assignment and recognizes the complexities of the issue.
<u>Weak</u>: The paper treats the assignment in a simplistic, superficial, or disjointed manner.

Style
The effectiveness of the paper's sentence structure, word choice, fluency, and tone in terms of its purpose and audience
<u>Strong</u>: The paper's sentence structure, word choice, fluency, and tone enhance its effectiveness.
<u>Acceptable</u>: The paper's sentence structure, word choice, fluency, and tone are adequate in terms of its purpose and audience.
<u>Weak</u>: The paper's sentence structure, word choice, fluency, and tone detract from its effectiveness or are inappropriate to its purpose.

Grammar and Mechanics
The quality of the paper at the surface level: syntax, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and format
<u>Strong</u>: The paper is nearly impeccable in its syntax, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and format.

Acceptable: Sentence-level errors do not seriously detract from the paper's effectiveness.

Weak: Sentence-level errors are so frequent and disruptive that they detract from the paper's effectiveness.

(Adapted from the *Writing Program Course Book*, University of Southern California)

APPENDIX H: PARTICIPATION SELF-EVALUATION FORM

Attendance (lectures, seminars/tutorials)

+ -------------------------------------- o -- -
always   mostly   rarely

Amount of Contribution to Class (discussion in-class & on-line, recording, transcribing)

+ -------------------------------------- o -- -
outstanding   average   little to none

Intellectual Value of Participation (logic, creativity, question-asking, knowledge)

+ -------------------------------------- o -- -
outstanding   average   not valuable

Concision and Clarity

+ -------------------------------------- o -- -
outstanding   average   wordy/unclear

Working with Others (enthusiasm, co-operation, helpfulness)

+ -------------------------------------- o -- -
enthusiastic/inclusive   average   lackluster/domineering

Student Name:

Course:

Letter grade: This is a   □ mid-term estimate   □ self-evaluation   □ final grade.