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Pre-semester planning

- Go over TA responsibilities with TAs
- Go over University policy on assistantships
- Blackboard setup and tour
- Mention CTE, CIRTL, and teaching fellowships
- Discuss professors vision for section and go over policy on attendance, and quizzes
- Discuss TA mentoring and think about scheduling observations
- Plan homework due dates and policy
- Go over exam procedure and policy
- Acquire proper room/equipment access for TAs and Lab TA
- Coordinating the delivery of lecture material to students
- Assigning sections
- Scheduling Office hours
- Setup a GroupMe between TAs

TA Training

A TA training session should be held before the semester to review best practices in the classroom and build an effective pedagogical foundation. This training is typically held by the physics department and spans 2 days. All TAs are required to take this training at least once. Further course specific training is held by the professors for their courses.

The Intro Astronomy Archive – 110X

The Intro Astronomy Archive was set up to provide a repository for all the materials created in the intro astronomy courses for future reference. It allows instructors and TAs to access past course material and add new content to continue the line of knowledge. The archive is easily accessible on blackboard, access may be requested from a professor or staff.

Creating a blackboard site

A course's blackboard site is not created automatically. It must be generated from scratch each semester the course is taught. Getting the site up and running is simple but there are a lot of changes that need to be made to make it function effectively.

The department's administrative assistant, the DAA, has the ability to request blackboard sites. Speak with her at the start of the semester to get it operational and provide her with a list of TAs for the course so they are given access.

Once the site is running a number of settings should be altered from their defaults.

Changing email settings

Students should not be able to email all other students without permission, to access these settings go to Customization>Tool Availability and look for the Email row. There should be a grey circle with an arrow next to 'Email', click this then Email Settings to bring up which email lists students can send to. All boxes should be unchecked except 'All Teaching Assistant Users' and 'All Instructor Users'.

Course Properties

under Customization>Properties you are able to change the course name to something recognizable.

Current DAA: Jill Tarbell

Content Generation

Content folders should be created for Lectures, Homeworks, Solutions, and Course Info to keep everything organized.

Grade columns

You should go into the grade center and create a very important ungraded column 'Section'. Once created have each TA fill in their own students' sections. This will make grading a breeze as students are now sortable by section and also facilitate finding student's sections later.

You may also add in columns now for each assignment in the grade center and properly categorizes them for easy sorting later.

To remove clutter, access Manage>Column Organization and go through and hide Username, Student ID, Last Access, and Availability. You should also make the 'Section' column frozen by placing it with the Name columns.

Assigning sections

By far the easiest method for assigning sections is to create a Google sheet.

You'll find a link on the Blackboard site with this template.

- Make columns for section, location, time, and each of the TAs
- Fill in the sections, location and times of each section and share with the TAs
- Have TAs mark every section time they absolutely cannot do in **red**.
- Everything else should be **yellow** for the time being and TAs can rank their preferred sections.
- During the first pre-semester meeting go through and decide as a group who will take which section, changing final decisions to **green** to see if everything works out quickly.

Section and Loc.	students	Time	Jack	Michelle	Bryne	Daisy	Matt	Nic
202 SSB	18	Monday 2:30-3:20pm	Class		3	4		
203 SSB	11	Monday 3:35-4:25pm	Class		Class	2	3	Class
204 Rock	5	Monday 7:30-8:20pm		2	Meeting			
401 Lab	6	Monday 7:30-10:00pm			Meeting		Meeting	1
201 Rock	22	Tuesday 10:10-11:00am	1	Meeting	Class	Class	Class	
205 Rock	22	Tuesday 2:30-3:20pm		Class	Class	Class	1	Class
206 Rock	12	Tuesday 3:35-4:25pm	2	Meeting		Class	Meeting	
402 Lab	6	Tuesday 7:30-10:00pm			Meeting		Meeting	2
207 Rock	30	Wednesday 1:25-2:15pm		1		Class		
211 SSB	22	Wednesday 1:25-2:15pm			1	Class	2	
208 SSB	14	Wednesday 2:30-3:20pm	Class	Meeting	2	3		
209 SSB	11	Wednesday 3:35-4:25pm	Class		4	1	4	Class

FacultyCenter

- Once sections are assigned the HTA can request access to sections for the TAs through the DAA.
- Facultycenter provides TAs with a list of their students, student information, and picture rosters.
- TAs should have access to only their sections.
- The HTA should have access to all sections.
- facultycenter.cornell.edu

Current DAA: Jill Tarbell

Office hours

Organizing office hours

Each TA should sign up for 2 office hours. See the online template for help assigning office hours. While sections are being assigned, office hours can be assigned as well. All office hours will be in Clark 132.

Cancelling or moving office hours

-Office hours can be cancelled or moved if at least 24 hours of notice is given to the students through a blackboard announcement or email. If a TA cannot make it to their office hours with less than 24 hours of notice an alternate TA should take the office hours and arrangements should be made to reciprocate the time.

-If a permanent move needs to be made, update the syllabus and make an announcement in class and through email.

Dropping sections

Dropping a section may be necessary if there are not enough TAs or there are too few students in once section. Speak with the professors and the DAA about how to proceed with this.

Homework due dates and policy

At the beginning of the semester it is a good idea to look over the syllabus and the academic calendar to solidify when each homework will be handed out, collected, and returned. Determine how many homeworks will be given and what policies will be in place on their due dates and if any amount will be dropped.

For example: “Astro 1102 2016 10 homeworks will be assigned, 2 lowest will be dropped, homework is due in section and late homeworks are not accepted”

No matter what the homework policy is it is most important that the policy is understood and followed consistently by all TAs.

Room reservations and changes

There are many reasons to need a room reservation:

-Meetings, make up exams, review sessions, special needs accommodations, alternate section room, demos, etc.

Space Sciences rooms can be reserved through the DAA.

Rooms in Rockefeller and Malott can be reserved through: univ_scheduling@cornell.edu

Example email

To: univ_scheduling@cornell.edu

Subject: Rockefeller 122

Astronomy and Space Sciences department course ASTRO 1102

Jack Madden - jhm355

Exam review session ~ 70 students

Rockefeller room 122 for February 22nd from 6-8pm

Special equipment needs: none

Current DAA: Jill Tarbell

Recommended rooms for review sessions: Rockefeller 122, Malott 251, and Malott 253

If a room is not satisfactory, for example your sections are assigned to a room with no projector, you can email univ_scheduling@cornell.edu to arrange for an alternate room. If you do this check which rooms you would prefer and make sure they are available at the times you need and include this information in your email.

Extra time on Exams and special needs students

Some students will need extra time or special needs to take an exam. The most common is usually 50% or 100% more time. A separate room should be reserved for these students and their exam should be scheduled around the same time as the regular exam. The students requesting extra time or special needs are required to provide proof of this need as a letter from Student Disabilities Services.

Reaching out to students

After the first prelim email all the students who didn't take it or got very low scores or have done none of the homeworks and see if everything is alright. Some students may be going through something very difficult and reaching out to help them will be enormously appreciated.

Printing

Exams

- Due to the proximity of seats in the exam rooms it is usually a good idea to generate multiple forms of an exam. Label these forms A and B (or more) and rearrange the multiple-choice questions to limit the ease of cheating.
- If colored paper is available printing different forms in different colors makes it very easy to keep track of where exams are placed.
- When using multiple forms make sure the first question on the exam asks the student for their form letter. This way the Scantrons will be marked with the proper form.

How to print:

With a final pdf of the exam ready the exams should be printed to the printer in room 101.

- If your driver is properly installed for the printer there is an option to staple each booklet automatically. This can be found under "Printer Features" > "general 2"
- Ask Bez if you do not have this feature
- If difficulty is encountered print a single copy normally and then photocopy that using the printer's interface to make more.

Homeworks

Homeworks should be printed to room 101 using the appropriate billing code. This printer allows for fast double-sided printing and automatic stapling.

Proctoring exams

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the exam.

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- Try to maintain at least one seat in between students, this will not always be possible.
- Set up some system for informing students of time remaining and section numbers whether on the blackboard or projector. See archive for an automatic proctoring PowerPoint.
- Hand out Scantrons and instruct them to bubble in their name and section
- Hand out exams and inform students not to begin.
- Start the students as close to the class time as possible. If some students are late do not hold up the rest of the class as you get exam booklets to them.
- Have spaces set up for each exam form and Scantrons.
- If you suspect students of cheating, separate them. Unless you have indisputable evidence of cheating the most you can do is prevent it from happening again.
- Give plenty of warnings for time remaining.
- Collect exams as quickly as possible after time is up.

Scantrons

Use of Scantrons with class sizes under 200 is contraindicated

Steps to use Scantrons

- 1) The front office has blank Scantrons. Take plenty of extras for answer keys or make up exams.
- 2) Make sure questions are written that accommodate Scantrons. They have answers A through E and all multiple-choice questions should be worth the same amount of points.
- 3) Have students write their name and section on the Scantron for easy sorting later.
- 4) Once the Scantrons are filled out during the exam it is a good idea to scan them into a pdf for reference in cases of student complaints.
- 5) Fill out an answer key using a Scantron and make sure your name, net ID, and course number are clearly visible on the key.
- 6) Bring the Scantrons and the answer key to Bill LaLonde in Day Hall room B7.
- 7) He will have you sign a form and check that you have the key and everything filled out properly.
- 8) In 1-5 days, you will receive an email from Bill with a link to the results in an .sdf format, download it.
- 9) You can open excel and import the .sdf through file> import> *select file*> fixed width> next> finish> OK and delimit the necessary columns to make it excel compatible.
- 10) Once you have the results in an easy format you MUST use the online Cornell box system to send the grades back out to the TAs. Grades are sensitive info and can't be simply emailed.
- 11) As soon as you receive the email from Bill the Scantrons are ready to be picked up. Return to his office to get them.

How to efficiently design an exam to not use Scantrons

A template of a well-designed exam booklet can be found on 110X.

- Arranging the answer key at the end limits cheating and allows for quick scanning of answers by TAs during grading.
- Including the exam form as the first questions allows TAs to immediately check they are using the proper key to grade.
- Having designated places for scores increases efficiency for TAs while they tally scores.
- Always make sure the answer page is on the front of the last page. This will help with scoring efficiency and will reduce page turning during the exam.

Grades

Posting grades

- It is the responsibility of the TA to keep up with grades for their students.
- TAs should post their own students grades on Blackboard in a timely manner.
- A hard copy of their current grades should be kept by all TAs in the event information is lost.
- The Head TA should download and print the full grade center every week.

Sending grades

Grades with associated student information must be sent securely, never through email. You can either post these grades on Blackboard where the professor and other TAs can see or send them through the Cornell DropBox service.

See FERPA or Cornell policy 4.5 for more details on student information access.

Final grades

In the fall semester, final grades are due on the last day the university is open before winter break. In the spring semester, final grades are due before commencement day. To submit grades securely, send the DAA an excel sheet through the Cornell Box including the student's last/first name and letter grade sorted alphabetically by last name.

Running Review Sessions

- Typically, 1 review session is held before each exam and 2 are held before the Final.
- A review session runs for 1.5 hours by at least 2 TAs and covers student questions, practice problems, homework review etc.
- Room reservations should be taken care of well in advance so the session times can be made available to students.
- Please hold review sessions 2 days before the exam, students do not like review sessions that take place the night before the exam!
- It is highly advised for the TAs to go over the exam before the review session so they can more accurately help students focus on the necessary material.

Observing Night

- The DAA is able to reserve Fuertes for use, speak with her to set up some dates/rain dates for the observing night.
- The Cornell Astronomical Society (cornellastro.org) has many volunteers that are trained to use the telescopes and are extremely helpful in making the observing night successful. Contact them and arrange for a couple of their volunteers to help.
- An example of the observing assignment can be found on 110X
- Determine when astronomical twilight begins and schedule 1.5-2 hours for the students to make it to the observatory and complete the assignment.
- Make plenty of announcements before the observing night to inform students what to expect and provide instructions.
- Not everyone will be able to make it to the observing night it seems to work well to have the assignment due before the semester ends so those who can't make it to the observing night can go a different time or make their own observations.

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Weekly Meetings

An agenda for a TA meeting should include

- Collecting homeworks
- discussing homework to be handed out next week
- Discussing upcoming exam: who is printing, proctoring, grading times, extra time students, proofing questions
- Issues with lectures, sections, and students.
- Any other business that needs to be taken care of (labs, observing night, deadlines ...)

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are required every semester. The professor has the option to submit the evaluation questions or a default set will be used. the DAA will send an email requesting the professors to submit questions. A sample set of questions is available on the Intro Astronomy Archive.

- Paper evaluations may be helpful to TAs and can be completed on the last section of the semester.

Equipment needs

- Bez can loan out laptops, projectors, and laser pointers if needed for lectures and sections.
- Lab equipment can be found in Clark 132.
- The outreach closet in the basement of SSB has many demos.

Final Exam

Times

For the most up to date rules and the final exam times visit the registrar's exam page or Google 'Cornell final exam times' <https://registrar.cornell.edu/Sched/exams.html>

The exams are allotted for 2.5 hours.

Make-up final

If a student has more than two exams in 24 hours then accommodations should be made for a make up exam at an alternative date. Technically two exams at the same time 1 day apart with an exam in between does NOT count as "within" 24 hours.

More than two exams in twenty-four hours is defined as one of the following:

- More than two exams in one day (9:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m.)
- An evening exam followed by morning and afternoon exams (7:00 p.m., 9:00 a.m., and 2:00 p.m.)
- Afternoon and evening exams followed by a morning exam (2:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m., and 9:00 a.m.)

For a more detailed description of this policy visit the registrar's page

<https://registrar.cornell.edu/Sched/rules.html>

Teaching Fellowships and Opportunities

CTE

Cornell's Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) offers a variety of teaching seminars, workshops, and courses that you can attend to improve your teaching skills and learn more about higher education. To learn more visit cte.cornell.edu from there navigate to the TA section. A good way to get started is to attend one of their GET SET workshops, each month you are able to register to attend the sessions occurring in the following month.

Teaching Fellowships

CTE also offers fellowships to motivated TAs. There are two awards which involve taking courses in education and practicing your teaching skills. More info can be found on their website.

CIRTL

The Center for the integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL) is a nationwide network designed to innovate STEM teaching. Cornell is a part of this network and there are recourses available to TAs through this network to learn more about STEM education. They offer online courses, job opportunities, certification programs, and professional development workshops.