General Guidelines For Communicating with Faculty

1) Assume Best Intentions
   • Faculty are people too. Sometimes their many commitments make them seem rushed or flustered, but more often than not they are willing and glad to help make your teaching experience useful and successful.

2) Clarify the Issue
   • What exactly is the problem? Be as clear as you can about which pieces of the class are problematic? What causes the problem? How might the problem be addressed?

3) What You Can Do/ Have Done
   • What steps have you taken to solve the problem/ address the issue? Have you explored other options and resources for support?

4) Your Immediate and Eventual Needs
   • What specifically would you like to have happen? What exactly do you need from the faculty member? When you meet with faculty members have an organized agenda of specific needs and questions, rather than a vague general question. For example: “They, like aren’t talking. And we have like, so many things to go over.” Is a less useful query than, “I’m concerned about balancing content delivery with engaging my students in dialogue and their own thinking about the issues. I value the dialogue, but their quiz scores indicate some major gaps in knowledge, particularly in terms of subjects X and Y. Shall I forgo the actual discussion until next week? How might I resolve this?”

5) Relationships
   • Consider your relationship to recipient of this communication. If you are communicating in a group, consider who in your cohort has the best relationship with your faculty member and who might best be able to communicate the needs of the group. Also, keep in mind that there are a few conversations that are best addressed, at least at first, informally.

6) Document the Process
   • It’s useful to keep track of any communication between you, your fellow graduate students and faculty. These documents are useful for your own reference; they also help everyone in a large group have the same experience of any communication events. If you feel there has been miscommunication, you can better understand those events if you have access to what has been said.
Leading a Discussion Section

Freedom to Design My Section

Issues to think about:
- What has the faculty member said about their objectives for the Discussion Section?
- Is your plan equitable for all students? Are your students getting a roughly similar experience to other students in the larger course?

Grading

Issues to think about:
- Do you have examples of graded papers or a rubric from the instructor?
- Have you met with the other Graders/ Discussion Leaders to talk about a common grading scale?

Your Role as a Liaison Between Students and Faculty

Issues to think about:
- Are the issues with student comprehension common to all sections? Does it concern a majority of the students?
- Is the issue a recurring one or an isolated event?
- Is the problem logistic? Are there obvious solutions? Ex. A microphone, transcripts of the lecture, power points put on Blackboard, etc.

Workload

Issues to think about:
- Do I know what my workload is supposed to be? What exactly is my contractual obligation both in terms of hours and kinds of activities (lecturing, grading, supervising, etc.)?
- Am I the only one who is struggling? Are other people having similar issues?
- Exactly how long does it take me/us to complete the work?
- Which piece of the work takes the most time?
- Do you have suggestions for alternate approaches?
- What is the “chain of command” for support in your department?
Teaching On Your Own: Finding Support and Mentorship

Possibilities for support

• **Departmental Resources**
  - Other GTF’s, especially senior GTF’s
  - Faculty Advisor
  - Faculty “Best” Instructors
  - GTF Liaison
  - Administrative Staff (they often have access to previous syllabi)

• **Campus Resources**
  - TEP and our many faculty consultants and connections
  - Specific Student Support Services: Disability, Non-Traditional, etc.

Opportunities for support

• Consultations
• Classroom/ Video Observation
• Mid-Term Survey and Debrief
• Assignment Feedback

Notes: