Resources for Teaching Assistants

Note that these links are collected from a variety of people and institutions and therefore may refer to resources or services not available at UCSC.

PEDAGOGY

- **Teaching to different learning styles**  This short document outlines key learning styles and gives practical examples teaching techniques that meet the needs of different types of learners. This excerpt is from Teaching for Inclusion: Diversity in the College Classroom, a paper written by the Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1997).

- **Teaching students to think critically** (written by Anthropology Doctoral Candidate Kali Rubaii). Kali found that many students entering the university in the last five years have difficulty in thinking, producing independent ideas and opinions. She notes that it isn’t that students are less intelligent, but rather that they are the outcome of the changes required under the No Child Left Behind Act. They have been “taught to the test” by teachers who were punished for --or actively dissuaded from-- teaching critical thinking. In this article Kali defines the elements of thinking critically.

- Maximizing learning using **Universal Design** Learn about the principles to consider when communicating information to reach all types of learners with varying skills and abilities. These concepts are used in course, website, and building design to ensure equal access.

TEACHING METHODS AND TIPS

Classroom Climate

- **Creating a good learning environment** Important and related to all disciplines

- **Diversity and Complexity in the Classroom** This article, from the excellent book by Barbara Gross Davis called Tools for Teaching, summarizes best practices and research for faculty teaching to a diverse student body.
Engaging and Motivating Students

- **Increasing Participation**  
  This article offers practical strategies for getting students engaged in the class, including pointers on formulating questions to get the type of answer(s) you want.

Ethical Considerations

- **Ethics in College Teaching**  
  This brief article from the excellent book by Wilbert McKeachie, called Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research and Theory for College and University Teachers, reviews ethical considerations and values in teaching. As the article states: “It is a great privilege to be a teacher. But all great responsibilities carry great responsibilities as well.”

Grading

- **Evaluating papers**  
  This document covers how to evaluate and grade papers, provides time management techniques, and gives tips on identifying plagiarism. It is a chapter from a handbook compiled in 2003 by the director of the former UCSC Center for Teaching and Learning.

- **Using MyUCSC for Recording Grades**  
  Step by step instructions from the Office of the Registrar on how to use the system and get help, if needed.

In STEM Fields

- **Teaching qualitative problem-solving**  
  This article from Faculty Focus, a publication on teaching in higher education, highlights a strategy for teaching problem-solving and improving comprehension in classes/sections that include qualitative problem-solving.

- **Campus research**  
  This site includes summaries of innovative teaching strategies for large-enrollment science and engineering courses produced in 2013 by UCSC Education professor Doris Ash and two science Ph.D. students. These summaries review published science education research literature for the evidence regarding effectiveness of each strategy, challenges and mitigation for those challenges, tips of how best to use each strategy, and the best resources for more information.

Leading Sections

- **Facilitating discussions**  
  This document provides 16 tips for engaging students and encouraging discussion and discovery in a positive way. It is a chapter from a handbook compiled in 2003 by the director of the former UCSC Center for Teaching and Learning.
• **They are staring at me blankly**  This one pager gives practical clear examples of getting discussions going in class, helping you understand whether students understand the material or not.

• **Planning sections**  This one pager reviews the types of teaching techniques most effective for achieving certain learning outcomes (e.g., memorize, evaluate, synthesize, apply).

### Office Hours

• Scheduling Office Hours  One free tool for enabling students to sign up for office hours is called “wejoinin.” Here is an example of a schedule.

### Preparing to Teach

• **Before the first day**  This is a great article with a list of things to review with the instructor of record for the class you are TA’ing for to ensure that expectations are clear (for you and students). It also has tips for the first day and strategies for office hours.

• **Ten Tips for First-timers**  Review this short article from a former Teaching Assistant for key tips on a multitude of issues that will arise in the course of TA’ing.

• **Tips for memorizing names**  Learning students’ names is important (and sometimes hard to do). Doing so helps create a good classroom environment and improve students’ sense of belonging and engagement. It helps you manage interactions in sessions too.

### Writing

• **Teaching (and Reviewing) Writing**  This links to strategies and resources collected by UCSC's Committee on Teaching. It includes helpful information on designing assignments, evaluating writing, peer review, and student difficulties.

### Enhancing Your Teaching

• **Learning from the best**  Winners of UCSC Teaching Awards share their tips and reflections on teaching.

• **Seminal research on student success**  Seven tips based on research

### Common Challenges

• **Dealing (well) with controversial or difficult subjects**  This article gives tips on facilitating spontaneous and planned discussions on hot topics, including
setting boundaries, establishing a framework and purpose, and closing discussions well.

- **Imposter syndrome**  
  Great article for those who think they don’t belong (and that others may find out).

- **Students in Distress**  
  A comprehensive manual with information on recognizing and responding to students in distress as well as how to reduce stress in the classroom. Includes a section on graduate students, which it calls a vulnerable population.

- **Teaching Students with Disabilities**  
  Links to resources and information for faculty including creating accessible materials, supporting students with disabilities, and roles and responsibilities

**USING TECHNOLOGY**

- **eCommons, UCSC's collaborative learning environment**  
  This site links to UCSC's IT tutorials and services for faculty (and students) related to eCommons.

- **Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC)**  
  FITC, located on the lower level of the McHenry Library, consults on instructional design, eCommons (UCSC’s collaborative learning environment), student performance evaluations, and innovative classroom research. Check out equipment such as document cameras, adaptive listening devices, microphones, and Huddleboards (moveable whiteboards), and more.

**KEY POLICIES**

- **Academic Integrity** (for undergraduates)  
  This site reviews the policies and procedures a faculty member utilizes in cases of academic dishonesty.

- **Protecting privacy (FERPA)**  
  A lot of student information is private (and cannot be shared even with parents), for a variety of reasons. This section reviews the key parts of the laws related to instruction.

- **Sexual violence and sexual harassment**

**CAMPUS TEACHING-RELATED RESOURCES**

- **Academic and administrative calendars**
- **Campus Conflict Resolution** Services
- **Counseling and Psychological Services;** 24-hour phone line: 831-459-2628
  - Crisis assistance
  - Groups/workshops
- **Dean of Students**
  - Slug Support Program (including food, housing, financial support)
- **Digital Scholarship Commons**
- **Disability Resource Center**
- **Educational Opportunity Program**
- **Library**
  - Introduction for Graduate Students
- **Mental Health Resources Booklet**
- **Student Health Services**
- **Student Resource Centers**, including the African American Resource and Cultural Center, American Indian Resource Center, Asian American / Pacific Islander Resource Center, and "El Centro" the Chicano Latino Resource Center; the Cantú Queer Center, and the Women’s Center. They offer advising, meeting spaces, partnership, and networking opportunities.
- **Tutoring and Other Learning Support** – small group academic support for undergraduates
- **Title IX office**
- **Textbook lending library**

[http://studentservices.ucsc.edu/about/contact.html](http://studentservices.ucsc.edu/about/contact.html)  
This links to an extensive list of student services on campus.