

New Teaching Resources from TAP

This fall, the Teaching Assistant Project (TAP) is offering two new resources to help TAs become more effective teachers. Many TAs have told the TAP staff that they would like to have a chance to see how experienced faculty function in the classroom—how they hold students' attention in a lecture hall, respond to questions, generate discussion, work with the reading assignments, and deal with classroom situations. In response to this demand, TAP has developed two new programs designed to allow novice teachers to learn pedagogical techniques by observing the ways that experienced faculty organize their courses, manage their classrooms, and engage their students. One program facilitates the direct observation of teachers in the classroom, and the other gives inexperienced teachers access to video clips of several members of the Rutgers faculty.

The Master Faculty Observation Program

TAP has assembled a select group of outstanding faculty members who have volunteered to provide graduate students and new assistant professors with the opportunity to observe their classes. These faculty members are also willing to discuss their teaching practices with graduate students who have visited their courses. The participating faculty teach in a wide variety of disciplines—observers can sample courses in the humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences in classes ranging from ten-student seminars to 400-student lectures.

If your schedule permits, you may find it useful to observe several classes during your time at Rutgers. You can visit the same professor's class multiple times to see that professor cover a variety of topics and to watch how the class progresses over the course of the semester. Alternatively, you may want to sit in on several different classes, including classes outside of your discipline, to learn about various approaches to teaching.

TAs can also take the opportunity to see how experienced faculty members cope with a range of class formats and sizes. As a Rutgers Teaching Assistant, you are probably engaged in some form of teaching this semester, but your teaching

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TAPOnline

In addition to the two new resources featured in this issue—the Master Faculty Observation Program and the “Learning Effective Strategies for Teaching Undergraduates” Video Project—the TAP website offers many more tools, tips, and services. These include:

- Peer Observation Program
- Mid-semester Evaluations
- Videotaping Services
- Teaching With Technology Certificate Program
- "Ask TAP"
- Teaching Portfolio Guide
- Calendar of Events
- Links to Teaching Resources

The site also has useful information on WebCT, placing course materials on reserve, requesting A/V equipment, the FAS Gradebook, the Teaching with Technology Certificate Program, and much more. Visit taproject.rutgers.edu.

Resources...

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experience may be fairly limited. You may have had the chance to lead recitation or lab sections or to teach a summer course on your own, but few graduate students get the opportunity to stand in front of a large lecture hall or teach an intensive seminar. Observing various types of classes allows you to learn pedagogical techniques that can make you a more effective teacher now and can help you prepare for future teaching challenges.

The Teaching Assistant Project has created a guide to help TAs get the most out of a classroom visit. TAs are first and foremost graduate students, and, as a student, you may find yourself focusing primarily on the content being conveyed when you go to observe a class. While the material may be fascinating, and of particular interest if you are going to teach a similar course in the near future, there's a great deal more you can learn about teaching by broadening your focus. The "Master Faculty Observation Guide" suggests a variety of factors to consider as you observe a class, such as the setup of the classroom, the professor's demeanor, his or her instructional style,

interactions with students, and the use of materials. Focusing on such elements can help you to identify techniques that you want to incorporate into your own teaching practices, and it makes visiting a course outside of your discipline a useful experience.

The TAP website lists the names, teaching schedules, contact information, and class sizes of the participating professors. Graduate students who want to participate in the program and attend a class meeting (or meetings) should contact the faculty member directly to arrange a time for the visit and possibly also for a subsequent discussion about the faculty member's teaching techniques. Students who observe three or more class sessions during the academic year (three sessions of the same course or of different courses) can receive a certificate of participation from TAP. A list of participating professors and their courses, the observation guide, and an application for the certificate of participation can be found on the TAP website at:

[tapproject.rutgers.edu/
services_tips/
Master_Faculty.php3](http://tapproject.rutgers.edu/services_tips/Master_Faculty.php3).

[Learning Effective
Strategies for Teaching
Undergraduates](http://tapproject.rutgers.edu/services_tips/Learning_Effective_Strategies_for_Teaching_Undergraduates.php3)

With funding from a mini-grant for the Improvement

of Undergraduate Education from the Office of the Vice President for Undergraduate Education, TAP has created a multimedia resource entitled "Learning Effective Strategies for Teaching Undergraduates." This resource, which is available on CD or can be accessed online through the TAP website, provides information on designing courses, developing syllabi, and managing classes. It consists of video clips of experienced teachers sharing their pedagogical techniques and a variety of supporting materials, including sample syllabi, the *TA Handbook*, and documents on such topics as teaching your own class and planning a course. The video clips serve a double purpose. They provide a glimpse of experienced Rutgers faculty members in action, giving the viewer a chance to observe them working with students in a classroom. They also provide a direct discussion of teaching techniques. In the clips, the faculty members share their insights, experiences, and strategies for effective teaching. The faculty address many of the challenges of teaching, including motivating students, preparing lectures, establishing and communicating expectations, and finding ways to vary classroom activities and promote active learning.

This multimedia resource is available at <http://tapproject.rutgers.edu/video.php3>, or you may contact the TAP office to request a CD by calling 732-932-7747 or emailing tapweb@rci.rutgers.edu.

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Technology and the TA:

Help Your Students Become Responsible Cyber-Citizens

Today's undergraduates have grown up with computers and are quite comfortable with email, instant messaging, and the web. Because our students are adept at certain ways of using the Internet, we may think they are fully computer literate. We need to keep in mind, however, that they may not have learned responsible behavioral norms for computer use, nor do they always know how to evaluate whether a given website is a reliable source of information. Students don't always grasp that what happens in cyberspace can have consequences in the real world. TAs have many demands on their time and may feel that teaching their students about responsible computer use isn't a part of their job. As instructors, we all have a responsibility to help our students prepare for their lives—for work and citizenship—and this is a basic and increasingly vital form of literacy. To this end, here are some tips you may wish to communicate to your students.

Email

Many instructors are frustrated and annoyed to receive emails from students which are one long, rambling, incoherent, sentence, utterly lacking in punctuation or capital letters. Many undergraduates believe that email is an informal mode of communication, and they don't have to follow the rules of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Some TAs complain to each other, but don't take the time to talk to their students about email protocol. Let your students know that with a "messy" email message, their meaning may not be clear, and they may leave an unfavorable impression on a recipient whom they would otherwise want to impress, like an instructor, co-worker, or boss. Remind students that they should always identify themselves clearly and use the subject line to indicate the purpose of the email.

Respect for Intellectual Property

Students need to understand that just because something on the Internet is accessible doesn't mean they can appropriate it, and that they can get into serious trouble for violating the Rutgers Policy on Academic Integrity and intellectual property rights more generally, whether by illegally sharing music files or copying material from a website and pasting it into a paper without proper attribution.

Information Literacy

Undergraduates may not understand the difference between a commercial website, a news source, an online academic journal, and a website created by a group with a political agenda. Teach your students to become responsible consumers of information. Two online resources that can help you do this are the InfoPeople Project's checklist for evaluating Internet resources

(www.infopeople.org/howto/bkmk/select.html) and the Wolfram Memorial Library's "Evaluating Web Resources" page (www2.widener.edu/Wolfram-Memorial-Library/webevaluation/webeval.htm).

"Netiquette"

As with other areas of life, there are standards of proper behavior related to the Internet. These rules are often referred to as "netiquette," for network etiquette. Some aspects of netiquette are a matter of politeness; others conserve bandwidth or prevent the spread of viruses. Students need to learn that they shouldn't forward jokes and chain letters without the recipient's permission and that they should take steps to protect their computers from viruses. Familiarize yourself with the standards of proper online communication and encourage your students to do the same. Several guides to netiquette are available online. A few of these include: www.albion.com/netiquette, www.fau.edu/netiquette/net, and www.onlinenetiquette.com.

Get In Touch!

Tap Office:

<http://tapproject.rutgers.edu>

Graduate School - NB:

<http://gsnb.rutgers.edu>

TA Helpline: 932-11TA

TA
Helpline
Call
932-11TA
Monday-Friday
between
the hours
of
8:30 am - 4:30 pm

TAP Calendar

10/6	11:30 am-1:00 pm	Dealing with Conflict in the Classroom	CAC
10/7	11:30 am-1:00 pm	Public Speaking	BCC
10/12	12:00-1:00 pm	Active Learning	CAC
10/20	12:00-1:00 pm	Teaching Portfolios & Tenure	CAC

Call 732-932-7747 for information or to register for any of these events.

Want to be a Movie Star?

Get your class videotaped!

<http://taproject.rutgers.edu>
Call 932-11TA for details

Sign up for the Peer Observation Program!

Having a class observed by a peer can be a great way to gain valuable feedback about your teaching. The Teaching Assistant Project offers the Peer Observation Program to any interested TA. You will be put in contact with a fellow graduate student teacher and provided with helpful materials for giving constructive criticism. For details, or to sign up, visit the website!

<http://taproject.rutgers.edu/pop/pop.html>

Teaching Assistant Project

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