

To: FIRST-YEAR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH

From: **Laura Brown** Director of Graduate Student Teaching, 5-5180, lsb7  
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**About: Teaching Assignments for next year, first-time teachers**

Attached you will find a sheet asking for your teaching preferences for next year. If you expect to be teaching next year, read the rest of this memo and answer all the questions on the preference sheet. *This is important.* If you do not intend to teach next year, answer the FIRST QUESTION ONLY. Please return the sheet by **Monday, February 23.**

### **I. Courses you are eligible to teach**

Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Lecturers teach two kinds of courses: (1) multi-sectioned writing courses (First-Year Writing Seminars, Expository Writing, or Creative Writing courses); and (2) upper-level lecture courses with large enrollments, taught by faculty members, for which they lead discussion sections and grade papers. A complete list of courses you may apply to teach is attached to this memo.

First-year TAs are eligible to teach in single-description Writing Seminars (1108, 1123, 1127, 1134, 1147, 1170, 1190). These are typically courses whose descriptions appeal to large numbers of freshmen, so we therefore offer multiple sections. Whenever possible, you will be assigned to the same course both semesters in order to minimize preparation time for you and your course leader and also because it is easier to learn to teach when you have a chance to refine a single course by teaching it twice.

### **II. Summer Training Program**

We will ask you to apply for a Summer First-Year Writing Program internship. Most first-time teachers will be placed in the internship program this summer, for which you will receive your summer stipend. You'll be hearing more about your particular assignment later in the semester.

All first-time teachers, regardless of previous teaching experience, are required to take a preparatory course, Teaching Writing (Writing 7100; S/U only). This course is run by the Director of Freshman Writing Seminars, Katy Gottschalk. It is offered during the summer, as Teaching Writing I (along with or separately from the internship) and again in the fall, as Teaching Writing II.

### **III. Responsibilities of TAs in single-description seminars**

In the writing seminars that share a common description, the faculty supervisor typically meets with prospective TAs in the spring before the course begins to work out a syllabus together. (Slight variations in the syllabus may occur from section to section, depending on the policy of the course leader.) The course staff then meets regularly during the fall and spring semesters to discuss such matters as teaching strategies, paper topics and assignment sequences, common grading standards, and specific problems. These meetings are required and form part of the training of beginning TAs in the Department; at the same time, continual feedback from TAs helps refine and improve the courses semester by semester. Another function of staff meetings is to ensure that no TA teaches in a vacuum; meetings provide a forum for sharing the pressures and rewards of running a writing course with your peers. At the end of the semester, your course leader will write an evaluation of your work for the department teaching file.

#### **IV. About assignments and teaching times**

On the attached teaching preference sheet, indicate in order of preference the courses you would like to teach, keeping in mind the considerations below. Since our clientele is Cornell undergraduates, our primary consideration in assigning TAs to courses is the needs of the undergraduate program--student demand, the overall coherence of the offerings, and the pedagogical value of individual courses. The second consideration is the standing and the needs of individual TAs. You might wish to bear in mind that when you start to look for a teaching job it may be to your advantage to have on your record experience in writing courses as well as in courses in literature.

To learn more about the courses you wish to teach, read the attachment and speak with the prospective course leader listed on the next page.

About teaching times: we receive an enormous amount of pressure from the College, Registrar, and Writing Program to distribute courses evenly throughout the day and the week. This is necessary for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is efficient use of the ever-shrinking supply of classroom space. Conflicts with required courses and your own graduate course schedule also come into play. We may not be able to assign you to a time you might consider ideal, but in assigning course times, we take the following into consideration:

- ✓ Those few students who have special needs receive first preference; these may include childcare, a health condition, or a long commute.
- ✓ Sections meeting at 8:00 or 8:40 will go by lot to first-year TAs. (If you prefer an early morning assignment, please request it; you are almost certain to get your wish.)
- ✓ If you are a night owl, you may wish to request a MW 7:30 evening section.
- ✓ Students who are still taking graduate courses (which are generally offered in the afternoons) are assigned to morning sections to avoid conflicts.
- ✓ In general, we favor the senior person in cases of conflict. When no clear seniority exists, we draw lots.

After assignments are announced, if you have an academic conflict, please see Darlene Flint.