

# Teaching Assistant Preparatory Course Guide<sup>1</sup>

## FALL 2001

### Introduction

Welcome to the University of Arkansas' Physics department Teaching Assistant (TA) Preparation course. This course takes place prior to the start of classes in the fall and counts as a one-credit hour course. Our graduate student body is made up of a widely diverse group of excellent students from many different institutions both in the U.S. and abroad. Many of our graduate students will earn a M.S. or Ph.D. and move on to take jobs in industry. Others will fill positions in academia. Whether a graduate student is headed for industry or a teaching position, they will be required to interact with undergraduate students at some point during the pursuit of their degree. This interaction may range from instructing a lab section to grading exams for a course. No matter what future occupation a graduate student plans, **communication skills**, important to being a good teacher, will be vital.

Our TAs bring with them many different educational experiences, skills and abilities. No matter the amount of experience a TA may have, they tend to be unsure of what will be asked of them while performing their duties and responsibilities. The goals of this course address these concerns and list in detail the different duties and responsibilities they will perform. This course is designed to introduce TAs to the types of classes they will instruct and introduce them to the type of students with whom they will interact.

This course does not cover how to teach students with disabilities. For more information concerning this topic please call Human Resources, 575-5351

### Course Rationale

The purpose of this course is to prepare graduate students to be the very best teaching assistant he or she can be, to develop his or her teaching skills, and to develop them professionally through responsibilities and duties. A responsible job teaching makes graduate students more attractive to research advisors and often makes a difference in getting a job after graduating. Many professors, who are asked to write letters of recommendation, will often comment on a graduate student's teaching abilities and communication skills.

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## Course Goals

- To help develop the teaching skills of TAs and to help them have an enjoyable teaching experience.
- To introduce TAs to the types of courses that this department offers to undergraduate students.
- To familiarize TAs with the expectations of the department concerning their performance.
- To introduce TAs to the demographics of the students enrolled in undergraduate physics classes.
- To introduce TAs to several problem-solving methods and instructional grading techniques.
- To familiarize TAs with a cooperative teaching technique used in undergraduate labs.

## Schedule

### Monday, August 13<sup>th</sup>

- Check in with Shari Witherspoon in the main office, PHYS 226. You will receive your office assignment, key card(s), and a welcome to Fayetteville packet.
- Advising with Prof. Raj Gupta on either August 13 or the afternoon of August 14.
- Check in with the Laboratory Curator, Stephen R. Skinner, in PHYS 246. You will receive your TA Preparatory Program packet and have your picture taken

\*\*\*NOTE\*\*\* You must have checked in with the physics department by Wednesday, August 15<sup>th</sup>; and you must register for the mandatory TA Preparatory Program. This program is a one-credit hour graduate level course required of all graduate students enrolling in the University of Arkansas' Graduate Physics program as of 2000.

### Thursday, August 16<sup>th</sup>

8:30 - 10:00:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome and introductory comments by the Vice Chair of Physics, Dr. Lin Oliver.</li><li>• Introduction to the program, review of the schedule and the course goals</li></ul>	PHYS 133
10:00 – 10:15	Coffee break	LOBBY
10:15 – 12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Duties and Responsibilities of a Teaching Assistant</li></ul>	PHYS 133
12:00 – 1:15	Lunch provided by the program. All graduate students are required to attend. <b>LUNCH TOPIC: “Preparing A Course Syllabus”</b>	PHYS 132
1:15 – 1:30	Break	
1:30 – 4:30	Science Workshop Seminar	PHYS 244
4:30 – 5:00	Wrap-up and discuss homework assignment for Friday	PHYS 244

### Friday, August 17<sup>th</sup>

8:30 – 10:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to teach an undergraduate introductory lab</li> <li>• Lab Guidelines</li> </ul>	PHYS 133
10:00 – 10:15	Coffee break	LOBBY
10:15 – 11:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grading</li> </ul>	PHYS 133
11:30 – 1:15	Lunch, we will walk to a local restaurant. Bring money. All graduate students are required to attend. <b>LUNCH TOPIC: “Utilizing the First Day of Class”</b>	PHYS 132
1:15 – 1:30	Break	
1:30 – 4:30	Problem Solving	PHYS 245
4:30 – 5:00	Wrap-up and discuss homework for Wednesday	PHYS 245

### Monday, August 20<sup>th</sup>

- Physics Summer Workshop with Ed Sobey, Peabody Hall 04 (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

### Tuesday, August 21<sup>st</sup>

- Physics Summer Workshop with Ed Sobey, Peabody Hall 04 (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

### Wednesday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>

8:30 – 10:00	Integrating the world wide web and computers into your class.	PHYS 244
10:00 – 10:15	Coffee Break	LOBBY
10:15 – 12:00	Integrating the world wide web and computers into your class. (Continued)	PHYS 244
12:00 – 1:15	Lunch provided by the program. All graduate students are required to attend. <b>LUNCH TOPIC: To be Chosen by the Graduate Students</b>	PHYS 132
1:15 – 1:30	Break	
1:30 – 3:30	“Professional conduct in the work place” Presented by Dr. Barbara Taylor	PHYS 133
3:30 – 4:30	To Be Announced	
4:30 – 5:00	Wrap-up and homework discussion	PHYS 244

**Thursday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>**

8:30 – 12:00	Meet with teaching assignment supervisors	
12:00 – 2:00	Departmental Pizza Party – Get to know the faculty	LOBBY
2:00 – 4:00	Meet with teaching assignment supervisors and/or work through the first several labs/assignments as related to your teaching assignment	
4:00 – 4:30	Wrap-up and discuss the TA Orientation Program hosted by the Graduate School	PHYS 133

**Friday, August 24<sup>th</sup>**

- Graduate Student Orientation (ALL DAY)