Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
2016-17 Guidelines for Graduate Teaching Fellows (TFs)

Assignments

Over the course of graduate study, as part of their training as teachers, all doctoral students are appointed as teaching fellows for five semesters. (Occasionally a research assistantship will substitute for one of these assignments.) An attempt is made to give each student a variety of teaching experiences (different courses, with different faculty members). Teaching fellowships normally begin in the second semester of a student's doctoral study and are expected to be completed by the end of the fourth year of study. The Graduate Program Chair decides TF assignments according to the pedagogical needs of the individual student, the curricular needs of the department, and enrollments in courses, attempting to match course needs with student expertise and preferences for teaching certain courses or working with certain faculty members. Students must complete all of their required training before receiving their degree.

Responsibilities

When assignments can be made early, the faculty member and teaching fellow should meet well before the semester begins to discuss course requirements, attendance policies and the range of the TF’s responsibilities both in and out of the classroom (teaching, advising students, grading papers, etc.). The TF’s responsibilities are based on the amount of training they have had and on their knowledge of the course subject matter. A beginning fellow may assist with course organization (photocopying syllabi, scanning materials and setting up the Latte site, ordering books, etc.), grading exams and papers, and advising students (i.e., consulting with students during office hours about course content and papers, holding examination reviews, introducing students to the library resources). A more experienced teaching fellow may further be asked to lead weekly discussions or labs or to present a lecture.

In order to encourage an open, cooperative relationship between the TF and faculty member, meetings should be held on a regular basis to discuss the progress of the course and any problems that arise. Every attempt will be made to resolve difficulties between teaching fellows and faculty members with whom they are teaching. In the unlikely event that it proves impossible to resolve a conflict, official grievance procedures, as laid down in the student handbook, will be followed.

If TFs are to grade undergraduate papers or examinations, the faculty member and TF will discuss the number of assignments, grading procedures and standards (letter grades, nature of comments on written work) and an expected range of grades.

TFs are expected to hold weekly office hours. They will discuss with the faculty member how much time they must devote to seeing students outside of class. TFs are expected to help students with their work and, in particular, with their written assignments. In cases
requiring exceptional attention, the TF may refer a problem to the faculty member and if necessary, they may seek assistance from the appropriate office on campus.

Faculty members will advise graduate TFSs on policies for academic honesty and sexual harassment at the beginning of the semester, at which time procedures will be agreed upon for alerting the proper university officers and dealing with such matters.

Evaluation/Oversight/Professional Development

Doctoral students are encouraged to:

- discuss teaching with the program chair and other members of the faculty
- consult teaching materials available from the Committee for the Support of Teaching (http://www.brandeis.edu/das/committees/cst/index.html)
- attend teaching seminars sponsored by the Graduate School (where they will receive the Handbook for Teaching Fellows)
- attend departmental workshops and seminars on teaching
- make use of mid-term evaluations and videotaping facilities to improve classroom performance
- keep a file of their teaching evaluations for future job searches

First year NEJS doctoral students must attend the Graduate School’s Teaching Fellow Orientation/Practicum (August 23rd, 9:30 am – 1:30 pm in the Olin-Sang Auditorium) before being allowed to serve as a TF.

The performance of each teaching fellow will be evaluated by the students in the class at the end of the semester. At the conclusion of each teaching fellowship, a written evaluation of performance (including the TF’s duties, mention of strengths and recommendations for improvement) should become part of the student’s file so that a teaching portfolio is built for the student’s job dossier. Faculty members will, if requested, otherwise provide letters of reference for teaching fellows who have taught with them.