

# **TA Handbook Supplementary Materials**

**AY 2020-2021**

**Senior TA:**

**Carolina Mayes  
SSB 422  
emayes@ucsd.edu**

**FA20 Office Hours: Thursdays 11am-1pm  
<https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/9652269672>**

## TA Handbook Supplementary Materials

*(Updated August 2020)*

Table of Contents.....	2
Preparing for the Role.....	3
Section Syllabus.....	4
Sample Syllabi.....	5-6
The First Day Overview.....	7
Sample First Email.....	8
First Day Ice Breakers.....	9-12
Section/Lesson Prep.....	13
Sample Section Agenda.....	14
Excelling in the Role.....	15
Discussion & Activity Ideas.....	15-16
Encouraging Discussion.....	17-18
Keeping Discussion Interesting.....	19-20
Grading Strategies.....	21-23
Sample Grading Rubrics.....	24-26
Sample TA Re-Grade Policy.....	27
Managing Hostility.....	28
Creating Inclusivity.....	29
Tips for International Student TAs.....	30
List of Past TAs.....	31

### **Preparing for the Role: All the Things to Consider Before Day 1**

(prepared by Lauren Olsen, 2017, revised by Cat Crowder, 2018, revised by Stacey Livingstone 2019, revised by Carolina Mayes 2020 aka pandemictimes)

In order to start things off on the right foot, you want to be fully prepared for your first section. Being prepared typically involves the following:

#### 1) Constructing a section syllabus

A section syllabus helps you to establish your section policies with your students: how you feel about use of technology in your section, your tardiness policy, your expectations for classroom culture, et cetera. It is also a good way to distribute other important information to students (some of which are taking classes at UCSD for the first time). I always like to put campus resources such as the Women's Resource Center, Raza Center, the Office of Students with Disabilities et cetera on my section syllabus for our students.

#### 2) Preparing for your first section

Your first section is different from other sections. There are a lot of introductions: you introduce yourself, your students introduce themselves, you introduce what section is (often students have never had section before and do not know what section entails/what it's purpose is – especially if you are teaching intro-level courses), and you introduce what your section policies are. Icebreakers are really useful here for students to introduce themselves and to generate a classroom culture where students feel comfortable talking. I personally like having students generate their own classroom culture on the first day of section by asking them what kind of a classroom environment they want. Usually number 1 is a classroom culture centered on respect.

#### 3) Sending an initial email to your students

An initial email to your students not only reminds them that they have section and that it is mandatory, it also can be the first sign you give to them that you are approachable and care about them and their learning.

## Section Syllabus

(prepared by Lauren Olsen, 2017, revised by Cat Crowder, 2018, revised by Stacey Livingstone 2019)

In order to construct a section syllabus...

First, obtain all of the essential information from the schedule of classes, dept & professor

- i. Course name, time and location of lecture
- ii. Section number, time and location of section
- iii. Professor's name, email, office hours (time and location)
- iv. TA's name, email, office hours (time and location)
- v. % of grade that section is worth
- vi. Attendance policy
- vii. Any other course-wide requirements (HW, drafts, discussion, late policy)
- viii. OSD Contact person – Jillian Tracy ([jrtracy@ucsd.edu](mailto:jrtracy@ucsd.edu))

Then, think through what your personal preferences are about a variety of things – a lot of aspects to section are up to you and your personal teaching philosophy; as a first-time TA, you can totally look at other TAs' syllabi to see how they arrange their syllabi but it is also a great opportunity to think about how you want to run your classroom. What is your stance on ...

1. ... students being late?
2. ... whether participation is mandatory? What counts as participation?
3. ... students using computers or cell phones in class?

### *Syllabus Components*

- a. Necessary, logistical information
  - i. Course, section, professor, & TA information
- b. Section description
  - i. Section is a place where we...
- c. Requirements
  - i. Attendance, in-class expectations, & HW (some courses will require you to assign section homework – check with your professor)
- d. All other policies
  - i. Lateness
  - ii. Technology
  - iii. Grading
  - iv. OSD Accommodations
  - v. Respect
  - vi. Email Etiquette/Appointments
- e. Campus resource available to your students
  - i. Women's Resource Center
  - ii. Black Student Union
  - iii. Et cetera

## Sample Syllabi:

Soc 70:

### **SOC 70: GENERAL SOCIOLOGY FOR PRE-MEDICAL STUDENTS** **Winter 2017 – Section Syllabus**

**Professor: Kevin Lewis ([lewis@ucsd.edu](mailto:lewis@ucsd.edu))**

**Pepper Canyon Hall 109**

Office Hours: M 2:00-3:00pm, Tu 10:00-11:00am SSB 495

Lecture TuTh 8:00-9:20am

**TA: Lauren Olsen ([lolsen@ucsd.edu](mailto:lolsen@ucsd.edu))**

**Center Hall 201**

Office Hours: M 12:00-2:00pm SSB 422

Section A02: M 11:00-11:50am

Section = **30%** of Course Grade

#### **Overview**

Sociology is a wonderful subject because many of the sociological phenomena discussed are not only relevant to everyday life, but also acutely observable – especially in health care. My goal for section is for each and every student to become more comfortable with concepts on the MCAT, and it all begins with a certain intellectual curiosity. Section is designed to not only clarify the material discussed in the lecture and the readings, but also to critically engage with the sociological topic(s) we are focusing on for that week through lively group discussion and activities. Depending on the topic, and the author, each week's section may vary in activities, as some topics may require more clarification and explanation than others; however, I can assure you that discussion will be a weekly focus of our Section. My job is to not only help you achieve a better understanding of Sociology for the MCAT, but also to assist you in cultivating your general critical thinking skills. I encourage any and all questions about the material – chances are that if you have a question about the reading, others will as well!

#### **Section Requirements**

Every week, you are expected to come to class on time, excited and ready to participate in discussion, and with your homework completed.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required, will be recorded at section, and counts for your overall Course grade. This is how the attendance policy works *across* sections in SOC 70:

1 Section absence = Warning; no penalty on Section grade

2 Section absences = Grade lowered 1/3 of a Section grade (e.g., A to A-)

3 Section absences = Grade lowered full letter Section grade (e.g., A to B)

4 Section absences = Fail Section (you would be missing half [4/8] of the meetings)

Please note: No Section will be held in observance of university-wide holidays, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Monday, January 16<sup>th</sup>) & Presidents' Day (Monday, February 20<sup>th</sup>).

**Discussion:** Discussion can and should be fun and engaging. I used to be a shy student, so I empathize with shy students – while I absolutely encourage participation, I do not record it. We will do a variety of activities that will require you to engage with each other, usually in smaller groups.

**Homework:** Because the MCAT will test you on your understanding of sociological concepts *and* your ability to engage in critical analysis, the primary assignment for this section will be a journal. With the exception of Week 1, 6, and 10, each week you will write a one-page, single-spaced entry typed in size-12 font, documenting your thoughts, experiences, and feelings with respect to the course material. I will provide you with a choice of writing prompts, but I also encourage you to write on your own. What do you notice about yourself or aspects of your life that you may have taken for granted before? What types of evidence are more compelling than others? What arguments make you question the way you go about your day-to-day lives? When you embark upon these journal entries, think of them as a place to go beyond summarization and into a more analytical space – reflect upon the readings and discussions each week, attempt to apply them to the social world you see around you, and explore the implications of your reflection and application. As long as you demonstrate a thoughtful consideration of what you are reading and writing, you will do well on this assignment.

*Journal Due Dates (can be submitted electronically or in person):*

Feb. 6, by 11:00am – submit entries for Week 2, 3, & 4 in a single document

Mar. 13, by 11:00am – submit entries for Week 5, 7, 8, & 9 in a single document

**Important Policies**

I love working with students, troubleshooting problems and doing whatever I can to help you succeed. Please feel free to stop by my Office Hours (M 12-2pm). If you cannot attend then, please email me so we can set up another time that we can meet.

**Lateness:** If you are late more than twice, your Section grade will be affected.

**Respect:** Healthy discussion necessitates a classroom that prioritizes *respect*. Please act with humility. I want everyone to feel comfortable to voice their opinion, play devil’s advocate, or ask any question – this requires active listening and engagement with others, along with regular, old-fashioned respect for those around you.

**Disability Accommodation:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to speak with me at the beginning of the quarter to discuss necessary accommodations to ensure full participation in Section and the Course at large. Please also contact Teresa Eckert ([tneckert@ucsd.edu](mailto:tneckert@ucsd.edu)), the Sociology Department Disability Coordinator.

**Laptops/Cellphones:** Be courteous toward others with your use of technology.

**Email:** Please allow me a 24-hour period to return your emails. This is important to keep in mind, particularly if you have a time-sensitive question. Please put “Soc 70” in the email subject line, and don’t forget to put your name somewhere in the email!

**Academic Integrity:** Don’t cheat on your exams, be wary of course-wide study guides and don’t plagiarize <http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/policy.html>

## The First Day Overview

(Prepared by Lauren Olsen, 2017; Revised by Cat Crowder, 2018)

1. Get your materials prepped.
  - a. Jillian should have picture rosters & then a regular old list for you – give her 48-hours notice to prep these for you
  - b. If you want printed copies of your syllabus, get the copy card from Jillian’s desk in 101
  - c. Let the students know that section is being held (via email and via instructor)
2. Get to the classroom early for day one and put important information on the board.
  - a. It’s nice to get a feel for the classroom, see whether you have enough seats, what kind of equipment you have (if any), and so you don’t feel harried.
  - b. Your name, course # (e.g., Soc 1), section # (e.g, A07) and time (2:00-2:50pm)
3. Get started on time (or not).
  - a. There may be a debate here but I like to start right at the official start time, even though people will inevitably be late. But that is my personal style.
  - b. I like to start with a brief introduction to the course, the section, and me. It’s a variation of what I have in my syllabus, usually, and I will say a few things about myself: where I’m from, what I study, & that we will have the best time ever
4. Do at least the first two of these three things:
  - a. Have them introduce themselves (icebreaker)
    - i. I like to start with a speed dating exercise, which has some sort of variation on people saying their name, and something about themselves (e.g., ice cream flavor, hobby, career aspiration, cats or dogs, etc.)
  - b. Cover the syllabus
    - i. Make sure to go over this, so they know the requirements and the details of what is expected of them
    - ii. Leave time for questions
  - c. (Optional) Cover content, begin a discussion, or have them do a short survey
    - i. If there have been some lectures already and you feel like they could use some clarification, feel free to review some of the content already
    - ii. You can also take this opportunity to talk to them about how to read sociological texts or how to take notes (either in class or on the reading)
    - iii. You can also begin a discussion on one of the topics that has come up or will come up to get them going on that
    - iv. Finally, and this is especially helpful for first-time TAs, you can administer a short survey for them to fill out on scratch paper, asking them to tell you:
      1. Likes and dislikes about past TAs and sections (the joke, “now I don’t want to know any names” usually lands well)
      2. Something you should know about them as a learner
      3. Feel free to put personal spin on this too

**Sample First Email to Students**

(Prepared by Lauren Olsen, 2017)

Hi Students,

If you are receiving this email, it is because you are listed as enrolled in section A02 for Soc 1.

We will have our first section meeting Week 1, October 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9:00am in Center 223.

Welcome to the course -- I'm looking forward to working with you!

All the best,  
Lauren

--

Lauren D. Olsen  
Doctoral Student  
Sociology Department  
University of California, San Diego  
lolsen@ucsd.edu

## **First Day Icebreakers**

(prepared by Julia Rogers, 2015)

### *The Great Debate*

#### Variation 1 –

Put students into small groups. Hand out “ethical dilemmas” for the group to read and discuss. Tell them to try to agree on an answer to the dilemma. Later have them share the dilemma and answer with the larger group.

#### Variation 2 –

Put students into small groups. Hand out slips of paper and tell them that they contain ‘great debates of our times’. These slips of paper should have relatively innocuous topics (cats v. dogs, Coke v. Pepsi, toilet paper overhand hanging v. underhand hanging, Mac v. PC, Star Wars v. Star Trek, etc.). Instruct the group to debate the topic and try to persuade all members of the group to agree. Then have them share their topic and debate with the class. Often at least one topic sparks the interest of the class and incites larger debate. When you are done point out to the class that they were willing to speak about these topics because they feel they can be experts – encourage them to be willing to be equally talkative about topics in Soc.

#### Variation 3 – Class Debate

Have all students stand up and bring their belongings with them. Designate two sides of the classroom. Read off topics (see above) and have students move to the side of the classroom that corresponds to the side of the debate that they agree with. Continue to list topics until you find one that the students are roughly split in their feelings about. Then instruct the students that they will have a class debate on this topic. Give them 5 minutes to prepare two main arguments. Then have a timed formal debate on the topic. This will take about 20 minutes (this depends on the class). Again, at the end encourage the students to keep the lively debate spirit throughout the course.

### *A Hat Full of Topics*

#### Preparation:

- 1) Prior to the first day of classes prepare a list of ~30 questions (depends on size of class). There should be easy questions on a range of topics from “what is your favorite color” and “where is your home town” to “do you like reality TV” and “what do you think of Miley Cyrus”
- 2) Cut out these questions into strips of squares of paper, fold so the question is not visible
- 3) On the back of the questions write number (1-5), and try to make certain each number has an equal number of papers

#### Day of:

- 1) As students enter the classroom have them choose a folded up slip of paper from a hat or bag.
- 2) Instruct them to find other students with the same number written on their slips of paper.
- 3) Then have them open their folded papers and discuss the questions they have been given.

### *Silent Ice Breakers*

For these ice breakers you will instruct the students that they are not allowed to speak or write for the duration of the ice breaker. They must find a way to accomplish this task through other forms of communication.

#### Variation 1 – Line up by age or birthdate

Instruct the students to line up from oldest to youngest, or instruct them to line up by birthdate starting with January and ending with December birthdates

#### Variation 2 – Line up by height

Have the students arrange themselves from shortest to tallest

#### Variation 3 – Find your sticker group

\*\*This variation can be used as a first day ice breaker or later in the quarter to talk about social cohesion and belonging.

Preparation: bring stickers to class, of various colors or of different animals or other variations. Have 5 of a kind, 4 of a kind, 3 of a kind, 2 of a kind and one lone sticker. Make certain you have enough stickers for the entire class.

- As students enter the classroom place a sticker on their backs
- Instruct students to find their group – other students with the same sticker. They will have to help each other.
- If you are doing this as a first day activity do NOT include the one lone sticker (it might set that student up to feel badly about the class)
- Once the students have found their groups allow them to speak. Have them talk about how it felt to find their group. Ask the student who did not have a group how it felt to not find a group. You can parlay this into a discussion of social belonging and cohesion. I find this to be a good short exercise to spur discussion of Durkheim's *Suicide*.

### *Two Truths and a Lie*

People write down two truths about themselves and a lie.

Then introduce the three "facts" to the rest of the group, who tries to guess which one is a lie.

### *Vices and Virtues*

In small groups, students share a vice and a virtue about themselves. Give them an example so they don't get too intimate in regard to their vice (I use vice = coffee consumption, virtue = excellent at making lasagna)

### *Candy Coded Sharing*

Set up: Purchase 5 kinds of candy, or a candy that comes in multiple colors

Procedure: Have students pass around the candy and instruct them to take between 1-5 pieces. (If they refuse they automatically have to tell everyone 5 things about themselves.) Instruct them to not eat the candy yet.

Either put them in small groups or have them go around the room (depends on the size of the class). Have them tell a fact about themselves according to the color they have take. Examples:

- Red – favorite hobby
- Green – favorite place on earth
- Yellow – favorite memory
- Blue – dream job
- Brown – wildcard

Variation: Last name, First name topics

On the board list out the letters of the alphabet and assign topics to those letters, then instruct students to answer the questions associated with the letters that begin their first, middle, and last names. Examples:

- A-D What is your favorite color?
- E-H Have you ever had a pet?
- I-L What is your favorite movie (not film)?
- M-P What is your comfort food or activity?
- Q-T What is your favorite singer or band?
- W-Z What is your pet peeve?

### *Three Things in Common and One Difference*

In small groups have the students find three things they have in common – forbid “cop out” answers like “we all have hands”. Then have tem each find something unique about themselves that is not shared by the small group. Have the groups share their results with the class.

Large group variation:

Have students stand up and mingle, instruct them to form small groups based n shared answers to simple questions: how old are you? What is your favorite color? What kind of pet do you have? Which college are you a part of? Use questions with limited answers.

### *Other Fun Ice Breaker Questions*

If you were a vegetable, what vegetable would you be?

If you woke up tomorrow as an animal, what animal would you choose to be and why?

If you could live anywhere on this planet, and take everything that you love with you, where would you choose to live? Tell the group about your choice.

What favorite color are you and how does being that color make you feel?

If you could choose an imaginary friend (to become real), who would you choose and why?

If you could choose to be an age forever, what age would you choose and why?

If you could be in the movie of your choice, what movie would you choose and what character would you play?

If you could meet any historical figure, who would you meet and why?

If you were a city, which city would you be and why?

What are your favorite foods?

If you were a candy bar, which candy bar would you be? Share why.

If you were to change your name, what would you change your name to? Why?

Are you spring, summer, fall or winter? Please share why.

If you were stranded on a desert island, what three items would you want to have with you?

Share your favorite material object that you already own.

What item, that you don't have already, would you most like to own?

If you could only choose one vacation destination for the rest of your life where would you pick and why?

If your life had a theme song, what would it be? Why?

If you were to create a slogan for your life, what would it be? (Example: Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow, we all die.)

## **Section Planning/ Lesson Prep**

(prepared by Erica Bender, 2015 and Lindsay DePalma, 2016; Revised by Stacey Livingstone 2019)

### *Ideas for Section*

- Start off with any administrative announcements
- Anticipate what the students need to know and what they may have trouble with
  - Key concepts from the readings
  - Ideas from lecture that may need clarification/reiteration
  - Anything the instructor wants you to emphasize
  - Necessary concepts for preparing for an assignment or exam
- Tie the concepts into things that will spark discussion
  - Current events – at UCSD, in San Diego, in the U.S., or around the world
  - Short films, video clips, or articles
- At the end of the section, recap what you did and why it matters for the class and remind students of what is required of them for next section

### *General Tips*

- Remember that discussion section is not the time for you to lecture unless there are several items that need to be clarified. Discussion section is best spent in *discussion*.
- 50 minutes goes by very quickly; when making a lesson plan, understand that you may not get to everything. But consider having an extra activity or discussion question in case you have some extra time.
- Don't spend too much time on administrative items such as announcements or attendance. Five minutes at the beginning, five minutes at the end.
- It is essential to get to know students by name.
- Be flexible – you can anticipate how much time an activity will take but remember:
  - There may be differences from one section to the next
  - The discussion may go off in a different, but still useful direction
  - If the discussion is going off-track, steer it back
- Avoid simply reviewing/paraphrasing the readings and lectures
  - Go over difficult concepts for clarification purposes, but try not to just review
  - Have the students direct the section by getting *them* to review the concepts/readings, then provide them with a discussion activity that helps them use the concept. It can be great to connect the concepts to the students' lived experiences/current events...
  - Try to develop activities that encourage and reward students for keeping up with the reading and attending lectures.
- Communicate often with the other TAs, especially TAs in the same course
  - This will help the sections have more continuity and can give you good ideas about what to do in section, because chances are the other TA has already tested them out.
- Keep yourself on track throughout the quarter
  - Develop a "road map" to see the big picture of the course. Take note of important dates (such as exams/assignment due dates) and get a sense for what the class will cover.
- Keep the students on track throughout the quarter
  - It can be helpful to spend a couple minutes in the section reminding students what has already been covered and what to anticipate going forward

## **Sample Section Agenda**

(prepared by Lauren Olsen, 2017)

### *Soc 70 – General Sociology for Pre-Med Students, Week 2*

\*In general, section agendas depend a lot on the type of class, how they will be evaluated (e.g., papers vs. exams), and when in the week the section falls. I try to do a mixture of review, activities, previews, and applications each week, where I alternate between me clarifying/defining and the students talking/contributing/sharing. Usually, I end up sketching out the contours of my section agenda while I am listening to and reflecting upon the lecture component of the course. I hand write my section agendas, and do not use media in the classroom unless there is a really great, short video that seems perfect for the course.

**Agenda**                      \*\*I also write the agenda on the blackboard before section starts.\*\*

1. Announcements / Shopkeeping
2. Review: Questions on Lecture/Reading Material
3. Activity: Constructing Our Social World
4. Preview: Socialization
5. Application: Doctors

1. *Announcements/Shopkeeping* (e.g., when assignments are do, what the readings are, attendance, and anything else the professor may have mentioned to tell the students) {3-5 min}

2. *Review: Questions on Lecture/Reading Material* (e.g., what concepts/terms/theories would students like me to briefly go over – often I will turn the questions back to the class so that we answer these together) {10-12 min}

3. *Activity: Constructing Our Social World* (e.g., use a concept already in students' lexicon from the course – here I draw upon a concept "social world" that has already been outlined in lecture and then have students work on their own and then share in small groups as we build from micro (families, friends, local groups) to meso (organizations, school, religious groups, subcultures) to macro (national culture and international organizations and norms) – usually students will work on the micro on their own, share with a neighbor or small group, and then we discuss as a class before moving on to the next level, with the ultimate goal of situating all of us in our social world) {20-25 min}

4. *Preview: Socialization* (e.g, highlight a concept that will be featured in an upcoming lecture for students to get excited about and prepared to learn about – here I will generally define the process of socialization, something students already are intimately familiar with from having been repeatedly socialized) {7-10 min}

5. *Application: Doctors* (e.g, apply the concept they will be learning about to an example that they know a lot about – these premed students are already being socialized to become doctors, so we break down all of the skills/attitudes/knowledge they need to have as doctors, and then connect them with the activities/requirements/mentorship in place that helps them get there) {10-12 min}

## **Excelling in the Role: Discussion & Activity Ideas**

(prepared by Lindsay DePalma, 2016)

**“Listening Triad”**: groups of 3 where 1 student is the primary speaker, 1 student is the questioner, and 1 student is the listener and reporter. Students can switch roles during one class period or play different roles during the next class period. Assigning roles is an important technique for encouraging shy students to participate, and talkative students to listen. (Primary Science Teaching and Trust 2013)

**“Envoys” or “Go-Betweens”**: groups are assigned a task, problem to solve, or an issue to discuss. All groups can be working on the same problem, or you can have several problems – but there must be at least two groups working on the same problem. One student is declared the “envoy” and is responsible for sharing their group’s response with another group. Once the envoys return, each group must take the new information into account and decide whether or not to change its original conclusions. Each group will then explain how they used information from the other groups or why they decided to stick with their own conclusions.

**“Collaborative Learning Groups”**: students prepare individually ahead of time and then work together on a task inside class linked to the outside preparation. Groups of about 5 are created, wherein 1 student is the leader, another is the reporter, and another is a control agent who makes sure everyone in the group provides input. The entire class convenes at the end to discuss. (Rau and Heyl 1990)

**“Jigsaws”**: groups of students are assigned to become experts on some part of the task, either in class or before. This could be as simple as a question with multiple parts, or different theoretical approaches. Then the homogenous groups are broken apart and heterogeneous groups are formed with one expert from each previous group. Each expert must teach their expertise to the new group. (Aronson 2000-2014)

**“Reciprocal Interview Activity”**: students are divided into small groups and given a list of topics/questions to discuss. A representative is elected to share the group’s answers. Then, the groups can reform and create questions of their own that they want the instructor or the rest of the class to answer.

\*\*This can also be used as a first day activity to make sure students get course goals, expectations, assignments, etc.

**“Bloom’s Taxonomy”**: work step by step through the taxonomy as a tool to help students think in progressively more complex ways. Works on critical thinking.

**“Common Errors”**: think through common errors that students make with the discipline’ concepts and create activities that use them, “allowing students to see how what they think they know may or may not be correct, and coach them to mastery” (*In the Trenches* p. 139).

**“Peer Instruction”**: give the students a multiple-choice contextual question that really makes them think. Have the students write down their answer. (At this point, you can ask the class to share their answers and get a sense for the distribution.) Have the students pair up and discuss the answer they chose, and tell them they must convince their neighbor if there is disagreement. After the discussion, ask the question again and take a “re-vote”, then discuss as a class.

**“Games”**: Trivial Pursuit and Jenga are two games that can be modified to turn into a review/discussion activity. You can also make a Jeopardy template on Microsoft Powerpoint. Even simpler is to toss an object at students have each person who catches the object answer a question.

**“Voting on Topics”**: present the students with a couple different discussion topics and let them decide what they want to discuss that day.

**“The Socratic Method”**: ask a series of questions that are designed to take students through the main points/concepts. Note that this method is really contingent on the students having read the material, otherwise you will be asking and answering questions by yourself.

**“Brainstorming/Open-Ended Questions”**: ask questions that can have a wide variety of acceptable answers. You could also have students work on an answer in small groups and then move on to a larger group discussion.

**“Deep Reading”**: require each student to bring their reading and spend time in section deeply reading a particular passage. You can assign different passages to different students/small groups and then have the students/groups recreate the author’s argument (this is sometimes called the “jigsaw” method)

**“CAT Style Discussion Questions”**: each student comes to class with one question about the reading. In small groups, students answer each other’s questions and vote on the best one. Then the class answers the top question(s).

**“Small Group Work”**: break students into small groups and have them fill out charts/worksheets, discuss particular concepts or passages from the readings, etc. Then come together and debrief as a class. Note that you do not have to spend copious amounts of time devising handouts or worksheets. Depending on the course, a simple table will do. You can also think of different components for a potential essay question and have each group work on one component.

**“Student Presentations”**: have the students (alone or with partners/small groups) present each week on some element of the reading. This is similar to the way graduate seminars are run. Note that this will keep the presenting students accountable for the material, but the other students may not have done the reading and may rely on student presentations to replace actually doing the reading.

## **Encouraging Discussion in Section**

(Prepared by Lindsay DePalma, 2016; Revised by Stacey Livingstone 2019)

### ***Discussion Section is for Discussing***

- Students should learn from you and each other (peer discussion facilitates learning)
- Aim to have 50-75% of the class time spent in active discussion

### ***Tips for Encouraging Discussion***

- Set the example on the first day (think: the icebreakers as first toe in the water here)
- Call on the students by name
- Take note of who participates
- Encourage reluctant students to step forward and active students to step back (if you have students crowd-source their classroom cultures on the first day, you can add this one to the mix: step forward/step back)
- Don't stress if the discussion goes slightly off track, just keep the momentum
- Vary your approach as the quarter goes on and the students get more tired

### ***Other Tips:***

- If appropriate, try to begin where the students are. Then connect tangible experiences to the material.
  - Start with something about student life at UCSD that is relevant to the material, then make or have students make a connection.
  - Start with a recent story in the news, then connect.
- Ask questions that require students to demonstrate their understanding
  - Rather than "Does everyone understand?" or "Do you have any questions about t-tests?" (followed by silence...) ask "OK, so when would you use a t-test? How do you perform the test?"
- Encourage student-to-student interaction
  - For example, "John, could you relate to what Tracy said earlier?"
- Draw out reserved or reluctant students
  - Asking questions disguised as an instructor's musings might encourage students who are hesitant to speak. "I wonder if its accurate to describe Durkheim's theory as based on an autonomous notion of 'society'?"
  - You can also get reserved students to participate during group work. During group work quiet students might feel more comfortable talking to their peers. You can also circulate throughout the class during group work and talk to groups as they work on their assignment. I have found that quiet students will talk to me when I do this.
- Try the 10 second rule
  - Don't be afraid of silence or to wait for multiple hands to be raised. Waiting can be a signal that you want thoughtful participation. Someone will usually break the silence even if to say "I don't understand the question." If silence continues

you might say “Gee why is everyone so quiet?” or “It’s not easy to be the first one to talk, is it?”

- Ask for 3 hands
  - After putting forth a discussion question, say can I get three hands? Wait for those three hands. Again, do not be afraid to wait.

## Keeping Discussion Interesting by Varying the Types/Levels of Questions

(prepared by Lindsay DePalma, 2016)

### Vary the cognitive skills your questions call for (Bloom's Taxonomy):

1. *Knowledge skills*: (remembering previously learned material such as definitions, principles, formulas). Ex.) "How does Durkheim define organic solidarity?"
2. *Comprehension skills*: (understanding the meaning of remembered material, usually demonstrated by restating or citing examples). Ex.) "Explain how Durkheim believes the division of labor maintains social cohesion."
3. *Application skills*: (using information in a new context to solve a problem, answer a question, perform a task). Ex.) "How would Durkheim explain the purpose of labor unions with his division of labor theory?"
4. *Analysis skills*: (breaking a concept into its parts and explaining their interrelationships; distinguishing relevant from extraneous material). Ex.) "Provide the most important components of Durkheim's theory of division of labor."
5. *Synthesis skills*: (putting parts together to form a new whole; solving a problem requiring creativity or originality). Ex.) "How would you apply Durkheim's theory to make recommendations for resolving a labor union dispute?"
6. *Evaluation skills*: (using a set of criteria to arrive at a reasoned judgment of the value of something). Ex.) "In today's world, would it be useful to apply Durkheim's theory to a labor dispute to resolve the conflict, as Durkheim envisioned?"

(SOURCES: Center for Teaching Development Workshop; Davis, Barbara Gross. "Asking Questions" in *Tools for Teaching*. Jousey-Bass 1993.)

### Balance the kinds of questions you ask:

*Exploratory*: (probes facts and basic knowledge). Ex.) "What research evidence supports Durkheim's theory of the division of labor?"

*Challenge*: (examines assumptions, conclusions, and interpretations). Ex.) "How else might we theorize the way labor becomes divided among people?"

*Relational*: (asks for comparisons of themes, ideas, or issues.) Ex.) "What would Marx say about Durkheim's theory of the division of labor?"

*Diagnostic:* (probes motives or causes). Ex.) “Why might union organizers have historically drawn on Marx?”

*Action:* (calls for a conclusion or action). Ex.) “When approaching a sociological problem related to union grievances, would you draw on Marx or Durkheim?”

*Cause-and-effect:* (asks for causal relationships between ideas, actions or events).

*Extension:* (expands the discussion). Ex.) “What role does religion play within these theorists’ formulations on the division of labor?”

*Hypothetical:* (pose a change in the facts or issues and ask for possible effects).

*Priority:* (seeks to identify the most important issue). Ex.) “What is the key point of disagreement between Marx and Durkheim on the division of labor?”

*Summary:* (elicits syntheses). Ex.) “What themes and lessons have emerged from this discussion?”

#### Build up to an important key question

For example, if your question is something like, “Why was the AIDS activist movement successful in changing policies on experimental drugs in the US?”, build up to it with several questions to generate background and get students used to their knowledge:

- What was the political climate like in the early 80s/90s US around the issue of AIDS?
- How was the AIDS activist movement structured?
- What were the demographics of the AIDS activist movements?
- What tactics did the movement use to challenge experimental drug policies?
- Which of these factors do you think were most important in helping the AIDS movement change drug approval practices?
- Any additional factors?

## **Grading Strategies: General**

(prepared by Erica Bender, 2015)

### *Before Grading*

- Check in with the instructor and other readers in the course to get a sense for the “big picture.”
  - Will there be an answer key and/or grading rubric and what will it look like?
  - Will the grades be curved? Does the instructor desire a particular distribution?
  - When is the grading deadline? When will the exams be returned to the students?
  - How many comments should you leave?
- Make a rubric for your own use if you are not provided one
  - Even if just to keep track of the different elements of the exam and what you should be expecting (Example 1) or to orient yourself to what an “A” paper, “B” paper, etc. will look like (Example 2)
- Skim a few papers/exams before you delve into the grading to get a general sense of how students responded

### *While Grading*

- Leave comments that are concise and to the point
  - Don’t let comments get out of control in terms of length or quantity. Students can only “take in” so much information from written comments.
  - Consider leaving a few specific comments in the margins and more general comments on the last page
  - Be sure to leave enough comments so that the instructor will be able to see why you graded the work the way you did.
- Decide the strategy that works for you
  - Some readers grade question by question, because they can grade each question very quickly, other grade the whole exam before moving on
- Make a list of common mistakes
  - Inform the instructor and other readers about the pattern
- Write grades in pencil or on a post-it until the instructor gives you permission to finalize the grades
- Grade for content, rather than grammar, spelling, etc. (Unless otherwise instructed by the instructor)
- When grading final exams, leave few, if any, comments. Again, leave just enough comments so that the instructor can see why the work was given a particular grade.

### *Grade Challenges*

- Students have the right to discuss their grade with the instructor and, when appropriate, ask that the work be re-graded. If a student challenges your grade, they may come to you or the instructor claiming that they were graded too harshly or that they need a higher grade
- READERS DO NOT DEAL WITH GRADE CHALLENGES

- If a student is unhappy or unsure about their grade, they must address their concern to the course instructor
- Readers should not consult students about the grades. Consulting with students is outside of the reader’s responsibilities. Any student who has questions about their grade or who wants their work to be re-graded must take it up with the instructor.
- If the student meets with the instructor for a regrade
  - Be sure to have left sufficient comments that the grade will be relatively self-explanatory
  - The instructor may meet with the reader to review the work in question
  - After reviewing the work and discussing it with the reader, the instructor will make a decision.
  - If a student is still dissatisfied with their grade, they can appeal through the university
- TAS DO DEAL WITH GRADE CHALLENGES
  - Typically, your students will approach you first if they are unhappy with a grade
  - If you are unable to resolve the issue, the student may approach the instructor who—often in consultation with you—has the final say.
  - Consider outlining a clear re-grade or grade contestation policy in your syllabus so that there is clear protocol. This typically includes a “cool down” period, a cut off point, and circumstances under which a re-grade is considered (i.e. “I worked hard on this” or “I need an A in this class” aren’t sufficient).
- Preventing grade challenges
  - Use a rubric or some other kind of documentation
  - Give comments that are clear, concise, and respectful. Remember you are grading the *work*, not the *student*
  - Before returning exams, see if the instructor will obtain permission from students whose work was exceptional to photocopy and use these as examples when discussing the exam/assignment with students
    - Be sure to remove any identifying information!

### *Organizing Course Grades*

- Readers and TAs, alongside the instructor, are responsible for keeping the students’ grades organized, secure, and up-to-date
  - The instructor may give you a spreadsheet to fill in and return after you are finished grading
  - You can also create your own Excel or Google spreadsheet unless the instructor has a sheet they want you to use.
  - You can also record grades on Ted and some instructors may require you to record grades on Ted.
- Keep your grades organized as the quarter goes on and be sure to back up the file
  - This minimizes the risk of making an error or losing the information inadvertently

- Specify with the instructor/other readers how you will keep the grades organized at the beginning of the course to prevent confusion later on.

### *Final Course Grades*

- Some instructors will calculate the final course grades and upload them to the e-grades system. Other instructors will have their readers do one or both of these. Specify with the instructor ahead of time what they expect of the readers.
- Calculating final course grades.
  - You will have to know how to appropriately weight the students' scores to determine their final course grades (this can be done easily in Excel)
  - Verify with the instructor the letter grade cut-off points (for some an 89.5 is an A-, while others it's a 90) and the Pass/No Pass cut-off point (usually a C-).
- Entering final course grades into the e-grades system.
  - The instructor will need to add you as an authorized grader for the course and you will need to self-register into the e-grades system. Both of these steps **MUST** be completed **SEVERAL DAYS** before the grading deadline. To self-register, you will need:
    - Your UCSD email address
    - Your employee ID number (found on the bottom of your pay stub or UCSD ID card; email Beverly if you cannot find it)
    - The last 4 digits of your social security number
    - Your birthdate
  - As an authorized grader, you have the ability to enter the grades and send them to the instructor for review. Only the instructor can officially submit the grades.
  - Entering the grades
    - Use the drop-down menu next to each student's name and select the appropriate grade option
    - For some students, the grade option will be Pass/No Pass
    - Other students may have a "W" in the grade option column – they withdrew from the class and you do not need to assign a grade
    - Double check every grade before sending them to the instructor! Grade changes are a pain for everyone involved.
  - All students must receive some kind of final grade. If not a letter, P/NP, or W, they can receive an Incomplete ("I") grade, which must be arranged with the instructor. You can also assign an In-Progress ("IP") grade if a student has a pending academic misconduct case, but this must also be discussed with the instructor.
  - After entering the grades and sending them to the instructor for review, send your spreadsheet(s) with all the student grade information to the instructor so that they can review the grades.
- The deadline to have grades finalized in the e-grades system is the Tuesday after finals week, so the instructor will likely ask you to finish grading final exams by the Sunday or Monday after finals week, and will ask you to submit your grades usually by Monday night.

## **Grading Strategies: Rubrics**

(prepared by Erica Bender, 2015)

*Example: Sample Grading Rubric (for Yourself)*

### **Social Change in the Modern World, Exam 1 - Short Answer Portion (10pts each)**

1) Two ways humans were worse off after agriculture:

- Less diverse diet - famine and food shortages; More subject to contagious disease; Less leisure time; More subject to violence
- Partial credit for: inequality and being unable to resolve conflict through fission (would have to explain precisely why these things make people worse off)

2) Explain the switch to agriculture

- Full points: first domestication of crops yielded more nutrition, allowing sedentism and population growth, but then the trap of sedentism made them unable to go back to foraging (rising pop density, climate change, deskilling)
- 8 pts: mentions trap of sedentism but doesn't set up how/why sedentism 1st occurred
- 7 pts: only a partial answer and/or hard to understand

3) Why did foraging societies split apart so often?

- Irreconcilable disputes arise in proportion to the number of binary ties in society; as long as nature was bountiful enough it was cheaper to resolve disputes by walking away than by 3rd party dispute resolution
- 8 pts: memorized/recites 3 assumptions but doesn't explain how they fit together

*Example: Sample Grading Rubric of Paper Characteristics*

#### **A = Excellent/Superior Essay**

- Clear thesis; relevant introduction and conclusion
- Answer is complete and accurate
- Well-written, logically organized, strong argument
- Superior use of detailed evidence
- Demonstrates full understanding of issues and broader historical context
- Demonstrates mastery of course material with specific examples (at least 3) referenced in texts/lectures. Makes clear connections between specific examples and broader course themes
- Offers original historical insight and personal analysis

#### **B = Good Essay**

- Identifiable thesis, introduction and conclusion are decent even if unclear
- Well-written and logically organized, but some ideas unclear
- Answer is complete and accurate
- Good use of detailed evidence
- Demonstrates basic understanding of issues and broader historical context
- Demonstrates familiarity with, but not mastery of course material with some reference to examples in texts/lectures. Has some specific examples, but the connections are not made explicit/clear. Has some connection to broader course themes.

- Attempts to offer historical insight and analysis

**C = Basic Essay**

- Attempts a thesis, introduction, and conclusion
- Essay organization is unclear and/or problematic
- Answer is complete but vague; some inaccuracies
- Minimal use of evidence
- Minimal/vague evidence brings into question the basic understanding of issues and broader historical context
- Does not demonstrate mastery or strong familiarity with course materials; shows a more general understanding that someone not taking this course might have
- Attempts to offer some historical insight and analysis

**D = Below Basic Essay**

- No thesis. Introduction and conclusion are non-existent or problematic
- Essay has organization problems and does not communicate ideas clearly
- Answer is incomplete and very general, could be written by someone who did not take this course; contains more inaccuracies than accuracies
- Minimal use of evidence. Vague reference to course material
- Lacks Historical Insight

**F = Poor Essay**

- No thesis, introduction or conclusion
- Essay has organization problems and does not communicate ideas clearly
- Essay is not written in prose (complete sentences)
- Answer is vague, incomplete, inaccurate
- No use of specific evidence from course materials
- Does not demonstrate familiarity with course concepts or materials
- No historical insight nor analysis

*Example: Paper Rubric (To Return to Students)*

\*\*Rate each dimension on scale from Poor to Acceptable to Excellent, leaving comments under each section if necessary.

<b><i>Dimension</i></b>	<b><i>Poor - - - - Acceptable - - - - Excellent</i></b>
Thesis – Clarity and Innovativeness	
Argument – Structure and Logic	
Evidence – Quality and Appropriateness	
Counterarguments – Consideration and Refutation	
Prose – Clarity, Style, and Grammar	
Originality and Creativity	

**Additional Comments:**

**Paper Grade:**

*Example: Paper Rubric (to Return to Students)*

<b>EXPECTATIONS</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
<b>Content</b>	
Demonstrate understanding of the material	
Include and define key terms	
Answer all questions in the prompt	
<b>Argument</b>	
Makes a critical analysis	
Gives specific evidence	
Uses a variety of evidence/sources	
Integrates the evidence together	
<b>Writing</b>	
Organizes essay clearly and logically	
Avoids major errors and distractions	

**Other Feedback:**

**Paper Grade:**

## **Grading Strategies: Sample TA Re-Grade Policy**

(prepared by Erica Bender, 2015)

### *Re-Grade Policy*

Students have the right to ask questions about the grades they receive and, when appropriate, responsibly request that the work be submitted for re-grade. If you feel your work was graded unfairly, you are entitled to follow a procedure to have the work re-graded.

The following constitutes my re-grade procedures for student work:

1. I will not accept requests for re-grades until **2 full days after the work is returned** to the student. This is to give the student time to reflect upon my comments and why they were given the particular grade in question. Often, students will find that comments that don't make sense initially will become clearer after re-reading the essay prompt(s) and reviewing the assigned readings, lecture notes, etc.
2. Once the student has read and reflected on the comments left on their work, the student must come to office hours (or make an appointment with me) to discuss my work and my comments in greater detail. After we meet, the student can decide if they wish to submit their work to be re-graded.
3. To submit work to be re-graded, the student must submit a **written explanation** for why their work deserves to be re-graded. This should describe, in detail, why the work should be re-graded, pinpointing the area of their work that they think was graded unfairly, and provide clear evidence for why the grade was unfair. *I will only accept papers to be re-graded if they are accompanied by this written explanation.*

The student must submit these materials **no later than 2 weeks** after the work has been returned to the class. The student may hand me the materials to me in person during lecture, section, office hours, or by appointment – alternatively, students may drop them off in SSB 401 and ask the staff to put them in my departmental mailbox (hours: M-F 8:30-12:00, 1:00-4:00).

Please remember that when student work is re-graded, it is reassessed from scratch. I make no guarantee that the score will be higher after the re-grade.

## **Managing Hostility in the Classroom**

(prepared by Lindsay DePalma, 2016)

### ***Some Sources of Hostility in the Classroom:***

#### 1. Worldview conflicts

- Students' personal values (individualism, personal responsibility) vs. sociological knowledge (structures, constraints, causality of social forces, etc.) often perceived as leftist political propaganda
- Religious and moral beliefs (absolutes) vs. perceived moral relativism

#### 2. Teachers

- Unreflective teacher may be insensitive to experiences of students (ignores racial, sexual, class diversity or privilege)
- Excessive reliance on authority

#### 3. Misunderstandings

- Not comprehending the material or the goals of sociological approach to topic
- Interpreting sensitive topic in a personal way, losing focus on goals of sociology

### ***Some Expressions of Hostility:***

#### 1. Disparaging comments and outbursts:

- Attacking another student
- Attacking the teacher, his/her credentials, perceived political bias
- Expressing a mismatch between personal experience and sociological explanation

#### 2. Silence, disengagement

#### 3. Insisting on participating in discussions but refusing to read the course material

#### 4. Dependence

### ***Some Strategies for Handling Hostility in the Classroom:***

#### 1. Prevention

- Show respect for students – learn names, solicit feedback, remember their vulnerability and the existence of teach/student power imbalance
- Use the midterm evaluation and change methods if needed
- Use syllabus to set ground rules for discussion
- Make caveats about sociology as probabilistic knowledge
- Begin discussion of controversial topic with free-writing exercise to help students place the issue in more distant modality

#### 2. De-escalation

- Do not get defensive or get into a power struggle
- Use humor if appropriate (without making fun of the student)
- Praise student for contribution, interest, passion

#### 3. Turning Hostility into a Teaching Moment

- Maintain the goals of achieving learning in a meaningful classroom interaction
- Redirect the conversation toward a sociological focus, away from the personal
- Emphasize the distinction between causal analysis and moral belief
- It may be appropriate to let a heated exchange proceed if there are no personal attacks
- Rephrase a hostile comment in "laundered language"

SOURCE: *Managing Hostility in the Classroom: A Book of Resources for Teaching, First Edition*. Edited by Rebecca Bach. American Sociological Association. 2002.

## **Creating Inclusivity**

(prepared by Lauren Olsen, 2017)

### *Elements of an Inclusive Classroom:*

- An environment wherein all participants feel respected, supported, and safe
- An environment wherein multiple perspectives, experiences, and scholarship are represented
- An environment wherein different learning modalities are encouraged
- An environment that recognizes and appreciates differences within particular groups

### *Things to Do:*

- Reflect on your positionality, your assumptions, and how you could adjust to allow all of your students to feel supported and thrive
- Cultivate an awareness of and be sure to respond to the portrayal of particular groups in the course content or in current events
- Ask students about their prior knowledge and about how they feel like their various backgrounds have shaped what they know
- Be an advocate or an ally for all students, by letting them know you are willing to help and for providing them with resources

### *Things to Avoid:*

- Presentations of material or opinions that trivialize or marginalize one group while normalizing the dominant group's perspective or experience (e.g., health disparities by race/sexuality/gender presented as an afterthought where white/heterosexual/male are thus implicitly considered to be default)
- Language that dehumanizes or excludes a particular group (e.g., say white folks and black folks rather than whites and blacks, they rather than he/she; avoid jokes or even offhand comments like "I'm crippled by writers' block" or "that person is so insane")
- Cultural references that exclude particular groups (e.g., U.S.-centric TV shows or movies, sports references, etc.)
- Tokenizing students who are underrepresented (e.g., calling upon one student who identifies as X – or worse, has been categorized by others as X – to talk about the experiences of X)

SOURCE: Saunders, Shari and Diana Kardia. "Creating Inclusive College Classrooms."

University of Michigan: Center for Research on Learning and Teaching.

[http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p3\\_1](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p3_1)

### **Tips for International Student TAs**

(prepared by Yao-Tai Li, 2017)

One particular tip I think that is extremely helpful for me is making slides to highlight my points. I am self-aware sometimes that my accent and pronunciation might get students confused, so slides really help this issue.

Another strategy is making sure students and I are on the same page. It's a training process but as I have more experiences in the classroom, I can tell whether students are on the same page with me or not through their "facial expression" or body language. So I constantly ask them if they have any questions or ask about their thoughts after finishing one portion of the section.

The other thing is about grading. This might be applicable to all TAs, but I think it's particularly true for international student TAs, which is: justify how you grade (or create a rubric). I've heard so many stories about students who came to challenge international student TAs and think their English is too bad to understand what the student tries to say. So, writing as many comments on the exams/papers and having a short session in section after the exams to explain how you grade would be really helpful. I learned this from Rick and Kwai!

The last, but certainly not the least, is about mental health. I am sure it's common that international student TAs would get frustrated, especially lots of times one can not easily express what they really want to say and need to transform their thoughts to another language (English). It could lead to a vicious circle (loss of confidence that then influences teaching quality). To fix this issue, I would certainly encourage international student TAs to slow their speaking pace down because it's far more important to make sure students understand than throw everything out too quickly.

There are also resources provided by the Teaching and Learning Commons:

<https://commons.ucsd.edu/educators/ELP-ii/resources.html>

**UCSD Department of Sociology Past TAs (2014-2018)**

<b>Soc 1 – <i>Intro to Sociology</i> –</b>	Cory Caswell, Dan Driscoll, Katie Hale, Haley McInnis, Ally (Yue) Yang (all with Skrentny as instructor)
<b>Soc 2 – <i>The Study of Society</i> –</b>	Crystal Ben, Stacey Livingstone
<b>Soc 10 – <i>American Society</i> –</b>	Doreen Hsu
<b>Soc 20 – <i>Social Change-Modern World</i> –</b>	Doreen Hsu
<b>Soc 30 – <i>Science, Technology &amp; Society</i> –</b>	Chad Valasek
<b>Soc 40 – <i>Soc of Health Care Issues</i> –</b>	Crystal Ben, Cat Crowder, Katie Hale, Haley McInnis
<b>Soc 50 – <i>Intro to Law and Society</i> –</b>	Joseph Wang
<b>Soc 60 – <i>Practice of Social Research</i> –</b>	Dan Driscoll, Cat Crowder
<b>Soc 70 – <i>Intro to Soc for Pre-Meds</i> –</b>	Cory Caswell, Katie Hale, Haley McInnis
<b>Soc 100 – <i>Classical Soc Theory</i> –</b>	Davide Carpano, Heather Harper, Seth Merritt, Jon Ruiz