Juggling Manapua: Being a Teacher & Student at the Same Time: Orientation for International Teaching Assistants

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In small groups, share several responses for each of these questions:

- What things are you most looking forward to about being a TA?
- What things about being a TA do you feel a bit of anxiety about?
What things are you most looking forward to about being a TA?

- Salary
- Tuition waiver
- Office on campus
- Add to my CV
- Work directly with faculty in my field
- A chance to teach
- Learn more deeply about my field (to teach something, you have to learn it well)
What things are you most looking forward to about being a TA?

- Connect research & teaching
- Improve English abilities
- Learn from students
- Collegiality with & learn from other TAs
- A stepping stone in my career
- Freedom to develop curriculum
Areas of Concern:
1. Culture

- Ways of teaching and learning may be different
- Ways and expectations regarding grading may be different
- Saying the wrong thing re: sensitive topics
Areas of Concern:  
2. Language

- Miscommunication
- Pronunciation – can students understand me?
- Grading/correcting students’ work
- What if students try to manipulate me because I’m not a native speaker of English?
Areas of Concern: 3. Teaching

- Nervous in front of an audience
- First time to teach – can I do it well?
- ITAs may be perceived as “less” than instructors or professors
- Who do I ask for help?
- How do I create or find syllabi & materials?
- Learning the course I’m teaching
Areas of Concern: 3. Teaching

- Having to teach 2 very different courses
- Familiarity with new technologies
- Dealing with students’ questions
- Dealing with problem situations
- How do I know if students like the class, and are learning what they should?
- Responsibility for students’ grades
- Time issues – will I have enough time to teach and take care of my own studies?
I. Different Concepts of Culture: Some Useful Metaphors - Iceberg
I. Different Concepts of Culture: Some Useful Metaphors - Routes vs. Roots

Source: Clifford, J., 2013
I. Different Concepts of Culture: Some Useful Metaphors - Langua-culture

Source: Agar, M., 1996
I. Culture: How can it affect you as a TA?

- Learn the academic culture of the USA, UHM, Hawaii, your department. It takes time…

- Figure out the different resources and offices on campus with useful information

- Be aware of cultural differences between you & your students
II. Language:

*Keep things in perspective:*

- Everyone speaks with an accent
- UH population – multilingual/multicultural students & teachers
II. Language: Effective Teacher Communication:

- Phrases as hints in your talks
- Comprehensible pronunciation - key words & repeated words
- Rephrase
- Visuals to reinforce
- Check understanding throughout
II. Language: Observe & Listen:

- Observe model teachers/communicators
- Pay attention to students’ reactions & adjust
- And finally. . .

Be realistic - not too hard on yourself
III. New Teaching Context?

- Nervous?
- I’m “just” a TA, not professor
- What if the students don’t like my teaching?

Answer: Emphasize your strengths!
III. Good Teaching is Good Teaching

- Be explicit & clear
- Develop a comfortable learning atmosphere
- Be organized; prepare well
- Use visual support
- Allow time for questions
- Understand who your students are, and teach to their level
III. Good Teaching is Good Teaching

- Use a *variety* of ways of getting student feedback
- Do some type of mid-semester evaluation (eg., CTE)
III. Teaching:
Getting Around on the Job

- Talk to other TAs
- Talk to your advisor (or other professors)
- Get prior semesters’ syllabi and materials
- Be kind to the department secretary
The Balancing Act

One last (but very important) piece of advice...

Set aside time for yourself.

It will make you a better student, teacher and person.
Put your heart in it! Mahalo nui loa!