COMPSCI 879 Teaching Assistants as Tomorrow's Faculty

Instructor: Neena Thota
Office: LGRC A353B
Contact: nthota@cs.umass.edu
Office Hours: By appointment
TA: Boming Zhang

Class Times:
We 5:30PM - 6:20PM; Lederle Grad Res Ctr rm A301
Fr 9:05AM - 9:55AM - Hasbrouck Laboratory room 138

Course Information

Course Description:
Congratulations on beginning your journey as an educator who inspires! I envision this course as a supportive and inclusive learning community. I hope that it will be a starting point for you to deepen your knowledge of how to fulfill your TA duties in an effective, inclusive, and pedagogically sound manner.

This two credit (not repeatable) course is semester long and a required component of the TA contract. The course is taken by all TAs in the semester in which they first assume assistantship. All CICS TAs are eligible and departmental consent is required for enrollment.

Course Objectives:

This course aims to introduce you to the tenets of inclusive teaching and learning. It focuses on the TA's role in leading discussion sections, planning effective review sessions, grading fairly, creating course content and assessments, and facilitating labs. Educational best practices that scaffold learning and create an inclusive classroom are discussed. How to balance teaching and research responsibilities, and how to prepare teaching portfolios and statements are addressed as part of your graduate professional development.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the course you should be able to:
  * use evidence-based teaching practices to stimulate active learning.
  * create an inclusive environment to broaden participation and support diversity in the classroom.
  * use discipline specific instructional strategies to scaffold learning.

Course Structure:

The course follows a flipped classroom model with students completing readings, assignments, and pre-class activities ahead of each session. Class time is used for group discussions and in-class activities. There are no exams and there is a team based project to complete. You should schedule time outside class for group project work.

Course Materials:

A textbook is not required. Assignments, discussion forums, and readings, as well as the schedule will be on Canvas
You should get your laptop to class to participate in online activities and surveys.
We'll use Slack for announcements and group communication. You'll be added to the course Slack workspace at the beginning of the semester.

Course Topics:

Please check Canvas for the latest weekly schedule, specific assignment details, and rubrics.
*   Student centered teaching approaches
*   Effective feedback (in-person and written)
*   Etiquette for communicating with students
*   Tools for teaching at scale
*   Creating an inclusive classroom
*   Peer instruction and other forms of active learning
*   Syllabus development - CS content
*   TA/grader coordination
*   Exam-writing strategies
*   Grading: criterion/norm referenced
*   Academic integrity; plagiarism
*   Being a responsible employee
*   Balancing teaching and research
*   Preparing for professional future with Teaching Statement and Portfolio

Weekly Schedule

Please see Canvas for the latest schedule and any changes in the due dates for the deliverables.

Week	Topic
Week 1	Course Orientation and introduction to project and assignments
Week 2	Giving Feedback, Facilitating & Leading Discussions
Week 3	Facilitating group work and office hours
Week 4	Supporting student learning

Week 5	Assessment & Grading
Week 6	Panel: Distinguished TAs
Week 7	Teaching for Equity and Accessibility
Week 8	Growth Mindset and CS Identity and belonging
Week 9	Building an inclusive community
Week 10	Being a Responsible Employee
Week 11	Thanksgiving Holidays
Week 12	Peer review of projects
Week 13	Teaching Statements & Portfolios
Week 14	Project preparation

Grading

Grades will be assigned for:
* Attendance and participation in class: 10%
* Completing self-reflections and participation in discussions: 20%
* Peer observation and report: 25%
* Creating a Reusable Learning Object (RLO) as part of a group project: 45%

Grading criteria can be found on Canvas along with the assignment details.
You may expect the following approximate grading scale: A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (60-66), F (0-59).
Note: Grades below C are not passing for graduate students.

Policies and Accommodations

Attendance:
This is a discussion and activity-based class. While participation, in addition to attendance, is an expectation of students enrolled in the course, I do understand that you may not be able to attend a particular class. Medical conditions, religious or funerary events, university-related events (conference visit, athletic event, field trip, or performance), or extenuating non-academic reasons (military obligation, family illness, jury duty, automobile collision) will be accommodated with written documentation.

Please fill in the *Attendance Excusal Form* on Canvas to be excused of attendance. You can miss attending one class with no questions asked. Should you need to miss more than one class, please let me know in advance.

Late Submissions:

There may be situations when you cannot submit an assignment by the due date. If you need an extension for an assignment due to the following circumstances, contact me with written documentation at least 24 hours before the assignment is due: medical conditions, religious or funerary events, university-related events (conference visit, athletic event, field trip, or performance), or extenuating non-academic reasons (military obligation, family illness, jury duty, automobile collision).

Course Incompletes

If you are unable to complete course requirements within the allotted time because of severe medical or personal problems, you may request a grade of Incomplete. Note that incomplete grades are warranted only if you are passing the course at the time of the request and if the course requirements can be completed by the end of the following semester.

Academic Honesty Statement:

In general, collaborative work is encouraged. For individual assignments, please refer to UMASS Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures for guidelines on what constitutes academic dishonesty and the sanctions that may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty: http://www.umass.edu/honesty/.

Note that CICS explicitly forbids any redistribution (including publicly available posting on an internet site) of any course materials (including student solutions to course assignments, projects, exams, etc.) without the express written consent of the instructor of the course from which the materials come. Violations of this policy will be deemed instances of "facilitating dishonesty" (since a student making use of such materials would be guilty of plagiarism) and therefore may result in charges under the Academic Honesty Policy.

Accommodation Statement:

Any student who requires an accommodation due to a disability is directed to contact the UMASS Disability Services: http://www.umass.edu/disability/ to obtain the appropriate accommodation forms. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first week of the semester. My goal is to provide every student with a high-quality learning experience. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about disabilities or any issue that may impact the quality of your learning.

Inclusivity Statement

In this course, we celebrate the diversity in our community and actively seek to include and listen to voices that are often silenced in the computing world. We welcome all individuals regardless of age, background, citizenship, disability, sex, education, ethnicity, family status, gender, gender identity, geographical origin, language, military experience, political views, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and work experience.

Participation Policy

To support an inclusive environment, please respect each other's viewpoints and maintain civility in the classroom. Please consult the UMass Guidelines for Classroom Civility and Respect: http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/classroomcivility. When asked to provide constructive feedback, do so in ways that are specific to the task at hand and focused on the work itself. Model the behavior that you would expect of the students in the class for which you are the Teaching Assistant.

Names & Pronouns:

You have the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that you use.. You can indicate your preferred/chosen first name and pronouns on SPIRE, which appear on class rosters. I am committed to ensuring that I address you with your chosen name and pronouns. Please let me know what name and pronouns I should use for you, if they are not on the roster. Remember: A student's chosen name and pronouns are to be respected at all times in the classroom.

Title IX Statement:

UMass is committed to fostering a safe learning environment by responding promptly and effectively to complaints of all kinds of sexual misconduct. If you have been the victim of sexual violence, gender discrimination, or sexual harassment, the university can provide you with a variety of support resources and accommodations. If you experience or witness sexual misconduct and wish to report the incident, please contact the UMass Amherst Equal Opportunity (EO) Office (413-545-3464 | equalopportunity@admin.umass.edu) to request an intake meeting with EO staff. Members of the CICS community can also contact Erika Lynn Dawson Head, director of diversity and inclusive community development (erikahead@cics.umass.edu | 860-770-4770).

Technical Support and Student Support Services

Canvas Support

If you need help with your Canvas course, we are here to support you:
- **Live Chat:** Canvas Support for Students
- **Phone:** +1 (855) 219-3080
- **Search:** Find the answer to your question in Canvas Resources for Students

Assistive Technology Center (ATC)

If you would like to learn more about using assistive technology tools, please visit the ATC website or email atc@umass.edu to schedule a consultation. The ATC is located on the lower level of W.E.B. DuBois library and is open to any UMass student, whether you have a documented disability or not. The ATC also offers workspace with access to specialized equipment and software.

Learning Support:

There are many resources for you on campus should you need them:

- UMass Libraries: https://www.library.umass.edu/
- Writing Center - http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter
- Learning Resource Center - http://www.umass.edu/lrc
- Assistive Technology Center - https://www.umass.edu/it/assistive
- Disability Services - https://www.umass.edu/disability/
- Student Success - https://www.umass.edu/studentsuccess/
- Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH) http://www.umass.edu/counseling
- English as a Second Language (ESL) Program - http://www.umass.edu/esl
- CMASS Success Coach Program - https://www.umass.edu/cmass/get-involved/success/academic-support
- Single Stop Resources - https://www.umass.edu/studentlife/single-stop
- Teaching Academy Resources: https://www.umass.edu/graduate/teaching-academy-resources

Other Support Services
- IT Support Center
- Writing Center
- Academic Support Services
- Student Success Services
- Student Life Single Stop Resources
- Disability Services
- Navigating UMass Amherst: A Handbook for International Students