

COM291 Undergraduate Teaching Assistantship

Associate Director of School of Communication: Professor Pete Smudde, Ph.D., APR,
Office: Fell 449
Email: psmudde@ilstu.edu
Phone: (309) 438-7339

This University Teaching Assistantship (UTA) is available on an application basis to School of Communication majors and minors who are interested in some type of instructional communication. The opportunity is an internship in teaching, and the primary objective is to help students learn and apply principles and practices of effective instructional communication that align with their career goals. Students enrolled in this course will have the opportunity to work as a teaching assistant in a particular communication class, under the direction of that class' instructor of record. In this way that instructor shall develop the UTA's familiarity with effective teaching and learning in the context of the class in which the UTA is serving. This course is designed to support students with formal and informal ways of exploring what a UTA is in theory and practice and how being a UTA benefitted the student.

Eligibility & Application Process

To be eligible, students must meet the following criteria:

- Achieved junior standing at the university (60 credit hours)
- Maintained a minimum overall 2.5 GPA
- Demonstrated interest in instructional communication (this can include teaching, employee development, training, or similar field)
- Completed the course for which they wish to be a UTA

The process for applying to become a UTA is as follows:

1. Determine a class and faculty member for which you wish to be a UTA, and ask the faculty member for permission to be a UTA in that class.
2. Discuss specific objectives and responsibilities that you will need to accomplish to earn credit.
3. These objectives and responsibilities must be documented along with other information in the Undergraduate Teaching Assistantship Application form for COM 291 on page 4, including obtaining all signatures. (See details below for completing the form.)
4. All applications must be turned in and approved before the student can attend the class. Per ISU policy, students are not allowed to attend a class for which they are not registered. Applications received after the first two weeks of classes will not be accepted.

For the application form (see page 4), the following categories of information are essential to explain. Insufficient or unclear explanations in any category will require the student to work with the class instructor to revise and resubmit the application:

- **Career Goal** — Your career goal should clearly indicate your interest in instructional communication. This section should explain how being a UTA will help you meet those career goals. Some jobs consistent with this include teaching and training and development. Vague career goals that do not align with a career the candidate is interested in are not acceptable.
- **Objectives** — Objectives should clearly list new skills, content, theory, or professional practice that the UTA will gain from this experience. Objectives should relate to instructional communication and should be something that is not easily taught in a course. Further, objectives should align with the career goal identified.

- **Duties and Responsibilities** — This section should detail the specific duties the UTA will complete. It should be consistent with guidelines for UTAs listed in this document. Duties and responsibilities should be consistent with the career goals identified.
- **Scholarly Outcome** — This section should clearly detail the scholarly outcome of this experience. As stated above, students are required to complete a course portfolio. This section should highlight how the items in the portfolio will benefit the UTA. This section should also explain what the UTA hopes to learn from this experience.

NOTE: Completion of the application does not guarantee a position as a UTA.

Guidelines for Students and Faculty

Acceptable tasks for UTAs:

- Instruct up to three portions of the class and/or conduct instructional activities
- Mentor students in the class
- Develop course materials (e.g., presentation materials, assignment sheets)
- Assist in designing and coordinating course projects
- Hold office hours
- Recommend innovations in teaching and technology
- Develop extra-credit assignments
- Conduct study sessions
- Work as a lab assistant (one-on-one coaching)

UTAs may not:

- Grade, evaluate, or critique student work, unless under the direct supervision of faculty for the purposes of increasing a UTA's knowledge of assessment
- Have access to students' grades, final evaluations, or other personal information
- Help prepare or deliver exams
- Complete any work unrelated to the course for which they are a UTA

Both UTAs and faculty members are responsible for ensuring these guidelines are adhered to. If UTAs or faculty members are dissatisfied with their experience at any time, they should consult the Associate Director of the School of Communication to discuss concerns as soon as possible.

Requirements

While a UTA's learning and experience is primarily grounded in the instructor's class in which they serve, to obtain credit for COM 291, UTAs are required to:

- Work 3 hours each week per hour of credit gained. (For example, if the UTA is enrolled for 3 credit hours, he or she must work on course-related tasks for 9 hours per week. This work includes going to class and having office hours.)
- Teach or instruct one or more lessons or instructional activities.
- Interact with students in the course to help them in their learning of course material.
- Given the "Guidelines" above, regularly work with the instructor about class content, especially concerning the purpose, preparation, and final products of instructional material for the class. Along the way, a UTA should discuss matters of teaching and learning with the instructor. The instructor will, in turn, lead the student in learning and applying principles and practices for effective teaching and learning in the context of the class.
- Communicate frequently and meet monthly with the Associate Director of the School about progress in and matters relevant to the UTA experience and work required for COM 291.
- Complete required two assignments (presented below) that challenge UTAs to explore selected scholarship about teaching assistants and reflect on their own experiences as a UTA.

The first assignment is to choose *one article per month* (four total) from a small collection of articles in the "Resources" area of ReggieNet, write a brief reaction and reflection essay about key "take-aways" and questions that bear on your UTA experience, and discuss it on the days all UTAs this semester meet with the Associate Director (**second Friday of the month; possibly held over Zoom; time TBD**). *Make sure your paper is not just looking at the "surface level" of the reading you chose but, rather, examines your thinking, feeling, actions, expectations, and experiences (including working with the instructor of the class) as a UTA in light of the article.* **Your work will be due that day** and evaluated holistically based on the accuracy of your use of any article, clarity of your writing and oral discussion, and depth of your thinking.

The second assignment is to produce a portfolio about your *whole experience* as a UTA—to give a complete representation of your experience. The portfolio must be organized and professional. It can include any resources from the UTA experience, and it must include the following material presented in individual sections, each with a section divider with the title of the section on it:

- A reflection paper (three to five pages) comparing their UTA experience to established theory and/or educational concepts they have learned in classes. This paper must include two or more scholarly sources that pertain to your objectives as a UTA and teaching, especially in colleges/universities. The collection of articles may be used, and you are encouraged to find others that fit your interests.
- Another reflection paper (two to three pages) about your performance as a UTA—how you met the objectives in the UTA application and how the experience will help you meet your career goals. This paper must conclude with a rationale for the final grade you believe you earned.
- All monthly reaction essays about the articles you chose to review and discuss.
- Cumulative/All work completed as a UTA (e.g., lesson plans, presentations, assignments, student feedback examples, etc.; also see the "Acceptable tasks for UTAs" in the Guidelines section).
- Résumé or curriculum vita.
- Final evaluation of the UTA experience (see page 5 of this document).

For the portfolio, you are highly encouraged to discuss it with the Associate Director of the School, especially to show work in progress. Plus, because each UTA is working under the direction of the instructor of record for a specific class, you need to check with the instructor with whom you are working to make sure the portfolio is a reasonably complete representation of their experience. Ultimately, the portfolio must be *submitted by email as an electronic file* to the Associate Director during the final week of classes, but it may be submitted not more than one week earlier. There are three options for an electronic portfolio:

- I recommend a single PDF file with all contents organized according to the syllabus/agreement, showing when a new section begins with a single page that has the title for the section on it, then have the required content for that section follow that page.
- You may use another program to produce your portfolio, if you wish, as long as I have the software to open it and read it. Check with me first in this case.
- One other approach is either a compressed file that has all your files individually with obvious names for what they contain *and* put into folders named according to the required sections. Also check with me about whether I have the software to open and read any files.

Final Grade

At the culmination of the experience, the instructor of the class for which a UTA worked will, based on the UTA's performance in the role, recommend a final grade for the UTA to the Associate Director of the School of Communication. The Associate Director of the School of Communication will **(a)** review the student's performance on monthly assignments and attendance at monthly meetings, **(b)** evaluate the course portfolio based on its completeness (i.e., presenting all required material in the forms/format specified), thoroughness (i.e., covering all relevant facets of the experience of being a UTA for the assigned class), and language use (i.e., proper American-English grammar, style, organization, spelling, visual presentation, etc.), and **(c)** use the student's performance in (a) and (b) plus the instructor's grade recommendation to determine the final course grade.

Undergraduate Teaching Assistantship (UTA) Application

Term (Semester and Year):

UTA Applicant's Information

Student Name:

UID:

Phone:

Email:

Course Information

Class:

Section:

Instructor's Name:

Instructor's Email:

Number of hours working each week (minimum of 3 per week per hour of credit):

Desired number of credit hours to be earned (usually 1-3):

Career Goal

[Explain how being a UTA will help you meet your career objectives; see helpful considerations on next page.]

Objectives

[What are the new skills, content, theory, or professional practice that the UTA will gain from this experience? Use bullet points and provide specific goals; see helpful considerations on next page.]

Duties and Responsibilities

[Identify the specific duties that the UTA will complete during this experience see helpful considerations on next page.]

Scholarly Outcome

[Identify the scholarly/academic product that will be submitted at the culmination of this experience. This must include the portfolio discussed above see helpful considerations on next page.]

Contract Agreement

Submission of this form indicates that the student and faculty member have read, understood and agree to the requirements in the UTA contract.

Date filed:

Student (signature):

Faculty: (signature):

Advisor (signature):

Associate Director of the School of Communication (signature):

UTA Evaluation

1. In what ways was this experience beneficial to you?
2. What suggestions would you recommend to improve the UTA experience in the future?
3. Do you feel the work you completed through this experience was consistent with the work completed in a standard course? Why or why not?
4. Would you recommend this experience to someone else? Why or why not?