Department of Sociology Procedure for Hiring Graduate Student Teaching Assistants and Lecturers

When evaluating applicants, the Chair and Associate Chair of the Department will consider, in consultation with instructing faculty:

- Whether a contractual commitment to the applicant already exists.
- The applicant's progress in the graduate program, including grades in courses and timely fulfillment of the master's, preliminary examinations, and dissertation requirements.
- The applicant's ability to effectively teach a course for which there is a departmental need.
- Where prior experience exists, a record of satisfactory performance of teaching assistant duties.
- Excellent English speaking ability and comprehensibility.

To be considered, an applicant must be in good standing in the graduate program; this applies to persons with funding guarantees as well as to other applicants. A graduate student with guaranteed support will be employed as stipulated in the original letter of appointment unless the graduate record or prior performances as a teaching assistant prove unfavorable. Students who may be at risk of losing funding will be notified at least a semester in advance and given the opportunity to remediate the problem. Students who are deemed ineligible to be TAs due to academic progress or poor performance as a TA will have the right to appeal this decision through the established procedures. When applicants for a position are equally well-qualified, consideration will be given to whether an applicant has available alternative sources of funding. Preference is given to students who are making good progress toward timely completion of the program. For TAships and short-term lecturer positions, the Department will consider graduate students from other departments only when the qualified and eligible applicants from the Sociology Department have been exhausted. Exceptions to this rule (prioritizing sociology graduates over those from other departments) will be made only when available sociology grad students are not qualified for the assignment or when a sociology graduate student is deemed ineligible or of lower priority due to poor teaching performance or poor progress in the program (including having been in the program 10 or more years), in which case the individual student will be notified of this in time to seek other employment and/or to appeal the decision. TA appointments are 50 percent of a semester salary and lecturer appointments are 40 percent.

All students are encouraged to attend the Sociology TA Workshop (time TBD, depending on availability). First-time TAs are required to attend this workshop as a condition of employment unless you have already taken Soc 910, Teaching Sociology. Experienced TAs in disciplines or settings substantially different from Sociology at UW-Madison may be required to attend the workshop. Students who have been TAs previously but who have not led discussion sections will also be required to attend. In addition, TAs/Lecturers who have received substandard student and faculty evaluations during their previous two semesters will also be required to attend the Sociology TA Workshop or another teaching seminar, and those who received substandard evaluations in one semester are strongly encouraged to attend. For these purposes, “substandard performance” on student evaluations is defined as receiving overall student evaluations below 3.5 in the previous two semesters. Most of our TAs/Lecturers get student evaluations above 4.0. Only about 10% receive scores below 3.5 in any given semester. Scores below 3.0 are rare. TAs/Lecturers who believe their low student evaluations are not indicative of substandard performance are invited to speak to the Chair and Associate Chair about the circumstances.

International students on F-1 and J-1 Visas are at risk concerning their immigration status if they are employed for more than 20 hours per week during the academic year.
This means the sum of an individual international students TA, PA, and student hourly help appointments may not exceed 20 hours of work or 50% time per week. Please keep this in mind if you are an international student.

Please note the following non-trivial but frequently overlooked aspects of this position:

• If you are a non-native speaker of English and applying for your first teaching assistant position, you are required to take a SPEAK test before further consideration. SPEAK tests are offered occasionally throughout the year by the University’s Program in English as a Second Language and required advanced registration through the department. Please take care of this as soon as possible.

• If you are a first-time TA, you will need to participate in the L&S and departmental training sessions that occur in the week before classes start. First-time TAs are also required attend the Sociology TA Workshop (time TBD, depending on availability) unless you have already taken Soc 910, Teaching Sociology.

• If you are teaching a “comm. b” class for the first time, you will need to attend an additional orientation that also occurs the week before classes start. TAs are required to register and attend this two day, three hour orientation.

• Your appointment includes the week before classes begin. Training and other preparatory meetings are held during this period and you are paid to be here to participate in orientations and work with instructors preparing for classes. DO NOT APPLY if you cannot be on campus the week before classes begin to be available these mandatory training sessions and/or preparation.

• Similarly, your appointment extends through two weeks AFTER the last day of classes (including final exam week and another week for grading). You must be available to complete grading work for this class on campus. Grading after classes end is part of the job for which you are being paid.

• You need to be able to attend the lecture associated with your course. This is part of the job.

Applications are usually available mid-October and due mid-November for Spring semester, available towards mid-April and due at the beginning of May for Fall semester. Graduate assistant job openings will be sent via email, with an electronic link to the application. You may request this link from Kim Gonzalez (kagonzalez2@wisc.edu) in room 8128A. For further information, contact Joe Conti, Associate Chair (jconti@wisc.edu).

The timing of the announcement may be slightly delayed in some cases due to factors outside our control.

Updated 10/20/2019