

Balancing Teaching & Research

UW Linguistics TA Training Workshop
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Why is it hard?

- Teaching is:
 - Hard, time-consuming, interesting, rewarding
 - Many people make a career of doing just that
- Research is:
 - Hard, time-consuming, interesting, rewarding
 - Many people make a career of doing just that
- Naturally it's hard to do both, do them well, and maintain a good balance

Why does teaching tend to take over?

- Teaching is like a gas...
 - It fills all available space
- Teaching has:
 - Clear, strict schedule and deadlines; well-defined tasks
 - Classes, grading, exams, etc
 - Direct responsibilities to others
 - Students, colleagues, supervisors
 - Desire for perfectionism:
 - Perfect presentations, perfect exercises, perfect evals 😊
 - Perfect knowledge
- Fortunately, like a gas, it's also compressible.

Compressing Teaching

- Efficiency in teaching:
 - Make scheduling work: set boundaries:
 - Set available times/latencies for responses
 - E.g. answer course email 3-5pm, weekdays (!), in one day
 - Reliability is more important than speed
 - Build and use resources:
 - Everyone in the class shares resources, responsibility
 - Students: discussion boards, pair/share, groups
 - Other staff: slides, teaching tools, advice, rubrics
 - Online materials: course notes/slides/hw; guides

Teaching Efficiently

- Managing perfectionism:
 - Allocate fixed time for material prep
 - E.g. morning before class
 - Build and use rubrics
 - Grade from (likely) best to worst
 - Be willing to say “I don’t know”
 - No one can know everything
 - Be Socratic:
 - Turn the question back: discuss, research

Bounds on Teaching

- Should average 20/hrs week
- If it's systematically over that, talk to someone
 - Instructor, lead TA, Sharon,...
 - Can provide ideas, assistance

Why is Research Set Aside?

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 - Less structure and fewer deadlines
 - Fewer responsibilities, at least to others
 - Need for perfectionism

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Why is Research Set Aside?

- Research seems to have:
 - ~~Less structure and fewer deadlines~~
 - Give structure, schedule, deadlines to research
 - ~~Fewer responsibilities, at least to others~~
 - Key activity for you, your advisor, the department
 - ~~Need for perfectionism~~
 - “The perfect is the enemy of the good”
- Not really – Treat your research more like teaching

Structure and Deadlines

- Give your research structure
 - Explicitly schedule time for research activities
 - Meetings, experiments/analysis, writing
 - Change is good
 - But context switches are expensive
 - Lay out short, medium, long-term goals
 - Research questions, tasks, papers, GPs, prospectus, etc

Strategies

- Schedule research time:
 - Ideally, multi-hour blocks or longer
 - Match tasks to available time
 - Find your best times
- Making progress:
 - Populate – and check things off – a to-do list
 - Timeboxing and avoiding ratholes
 - “Good enough” drafts

Final Notes

- Balance is not just between teaching & research, but also between academic and personal life
- What you do now is preparation for your future
- Set boundaries and don't be afraid to say 'no'
- Take breaks:
 - Clear your mind, get new ideas
 - Exercise, relax, (try to) have fun!