International Teaching Assistants Orientation

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Classroom Expectations in America

- You are both the teacher and the student in a culture that is new to you.
- Today’s goal: helping you in your role as a TA working with American students.
- What are your concerns about being a TA here?
- What have you heard about American students?
Classroom Expectations in America

- Characteristics of American students
  - Students may be less formal. They should still be civil, acknowledge your position of authority, and follow classroom rules.
  - Students may complain of difficulty understanding an international instructor’s language. Many students from KY may have had limited contact with people from different cultures.
  - Students come from diverse backgrounds.
Classroom Expectations in America

- Characteristics of American students
  - Students generally expect class, meetings, etc. to start and end on time.
  - Students may be entitled to accommodations (ADA) and may ask for them for other reasons as well.
  - Students may ask questions, make suggestions, or disagree with you in class. This is usually not meant to be disrespectful.
Academic Expectations in America

- Socializing with your students
  - Many Federal guidelines restrict the types of interactions students may have with faculty or staff
  - You should avoid situations that could be misperceived as a “date”
  - You should also be careful about use of social media with students
Helpful Suggestions

- Meet with the student individually to identify a mutually-acceptable solution

- Make your materials available in written as well as verbal form when possible, e.g. PowerPoint and Blackboard

- Check departmental guidelines that determine when/how to grant academic exceptions or extensions to students
Helpful Suggestions

- Write difficult/new words on the board
- Observe a successful instructor
- Encourage students to let you know when they haven’t understood something
- Avoid talking with your back to students
Helpful Suggestions

O If you don’t understand a question, you can:
  O ask the student to repeat or rephrase the question
  O ask another student to rephrase it
  O redirect the question back to the class (e.g., "That's a good question...can someone answer it?")
  O attempt to rephrase the question yourself and answer it only after you are sure of what the student is asking
Helpful Suggestions

- Engage in small talk with students; get to know them
- Share something about yourself with your students; let them get to know you
- Use and refer to campus resources
Transitioning to a New Culture

- Your transition to the USA will be unique to you and is influenced by such things as:
  - The degree of similarity or difference between your culture and US culture
  - Your fluency in English
  - Your support network
  - Prior experience with cultural immersion
  - Your general resilience
- However, there are often predictable patterns to acculturation to a new environment
Culture Shock

Culture shock is a type of homesickness. It is a term used to describe the anxiety experienced by a person moving to a completely new environment.

It is the result of feeling a lack of direction, of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment, and of not knowing what it is appropriate or inappropriate.
Stress Common to International Students

- Daily stressors: How do I find the right bus? Do I have the right clothes for this situation? For the weather?
- Individual stressors: I can’t get another job, I dislike my roommate, I don’t understand what is expected of me in my department
- Distance stressors: My parents are ill and I can’t go home.
- Atypical stressors: I was assaulted, I got a DUI, I was in a car accident.
Symptoms of Culture Shock

- sadness, loneliness, melancholy
- preoccupation with health
- change in sleeping patterns
- irritability, unwillingness to interact with others
- identifying with the old culture or idealizing the old country
- loss of identity, trying too hard to absorb everything
- lack of confidence, feelings of inadequacy
- developing stereotypes about the new culture
- longing for the family, and feeling lost and overlooked.
Resources for International Students

International Center

212 Bradley Hall  859.323.2106
http://www.uky.edu/international/about

UK Counseling Center

201 Frazee Hall
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  Monday - Friday
859.257.8701
http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Counseling