

PREFACE

Somehow, when we were in graduate school, the idea of teaching a huge class was something that, if we thought about it at all, was like cancer or horrible automobile accidents with body parts strewn over the highway—something that happened to somebody else. Certainly “the system” doesn’t prepare people to teach large classes. At most, a few graduate schools will have a week-long training session for teaching assistants, with maybe a low-key teaching seminar, but otherwise the assumption seems to be that teaching a large class is something like sneezing: a skill that is not terribly demanding, and one that one is born with. If you know your subject, as evidenced by a brilliant dissertation in the case of a newly hired instructor, or a successful string of publications for a more senior person, what more do you need to teach a large introductory class? A great deal, as it turns out.

The “game” has changed dramatically in large colleges and universities in the past few years. In the old days, large introductory classes for majors were viewed as a kind of Darwinian filter where unsuitable students could be expeditiously screened to a manageable number at minimal expense. Large general education courses for nonmajors were a necessary evil and a sinkhole for new faculty, or those on the department chair’s hit list. There were always a few thespian souls who loved big classes, but they were regarded as a benign aberration, once again demonstrating that the academy generally smiles on eccentrics.

Now, however, in large universities that were formerly funded primarily by their state governments, students’ tuition payments make up an ever increasing segment of the budget, and there is increasing recognition that students pay faculty salaries. That is an attention-getting thought, if ever there was one. The old chestnut that tough professors formerly used on the first day of class—“Look to your left. Now look to your right. In four years, two of you will be gone”—takes on new meaning, when you add—“and so will your tuition payments.”

With large universities engaging in aggressive recruiting competitions for students, retention of students who have been won in hard-fought (and expensive) recruiting battles assumes a new importance. If a marginal (but non-university subsidized) student can be retained for the full four years, deans and vice provosts for budget will have very large smiles. Unfortunately, the easiest way to assure retention is through grade inflation, a disease that seems to have affected even the noblest of academic institutions. In many cases this is a sure-fire (albeit questionably ethical) technique because the student has been long gone before anyone discovers that he or she can't write a coherent English sentence. However, in pre-professional undergraduate education, grade inflation is a much riskier business because most pre-professional students must take some sort of standardized knowledge test toward the end of their college careers (GRE, LSAT, MCAT, etc.), and this examination will quickly reveal that an institution's A grade is a mark of a sweet and winning personality rather than academic prowess. This information has a way of finding its way to prospective students (and their parents) to the detriment of the overly generous institution. Colleges (and professors) thus face a dilemma: How do you manage to retain increasingly marginal students without being able to use grade inflation, and without alienating the good students who reside on the other end of the curve? Even more vexing, how do you do this when many of the classes those students will take in their first two years will be enormous ones?

With present economic pressures on colleges, faculty downsizing, usually through attrition, has become the norm. At my own university, my department is half the size it was when I started more than 35 years ago, yet we have more majors and more students in our service courses than ever. This downsizing has produced two related effects: Class sizes are large, and it is increasingly likely that professors will have at least one large to huge class a year—even those who for many years taught primarily upper division or graduate courses.

These large, typically introductory courses have assumed an importance they never before had in the economic and intellectual life of the university. Rather than being a filter, or a necessary evil, they are increasingly being viewed as the critical point of first contact with students who may or may not make it through the university, and how the course is taught may

well determine whether the student becomes an alumnus or a dropout. If the class is taught well, dozens of students who enter with poor educational backgrounds, study skills, or attitudes can be “salvaged” for a full and productive four (or five) years.

But doesn't teaching a large class well take a staggering amount of faculty time? Isn't the instructor who is conscientious about teaching a big class risking his or her career, which in most large institutions is still judged by scholarly productivity? Maybe yes, maybe no—and that's where this book comes in.

Teaching large classes well is more of an art and a craft than a science. And, like any craft, it has tricks and shortcuts. But unlike a craft like cabinetmaking, one does not normally learn it through an apprenticeship. The public would not tolerate a medical system in which surgeons took coursework for four years and then were permitted to do open-heart surgery without an internship or some form of supervised apprenticeship. But in academia, we think nothing of standing someone with subject expertise, but no teaching experience, in front of a thousand students—it happens all the time. One of two things then usually occurs. The novice large-class teacher does everything he or she can possibly do to get out of the large-class assignment and stick somebody else with it in a couple of years. Or, they might decide that this really isn't as bad as it seems, and it might even be fun. In which case, they begin the long process of reinventing the wheel, stumbling by themselves to discover the tricks of the trade through experience. That is how I learned how to teach large classes, and it was many years of trial and error (and thousands of frustrated students) before I began to have any real feeling that I knew what I was doing.

There are a few fine books available about teaching at the university level, but most give only lip service to the problems and practicalities of large classes. Academia has seen dozens of alternatives to the traditional large lecture come and go (e.g., audio-tutorial, personalized system of instruction, etc.), but the live lecturer in a big hall, two or three days a week, and maybe a laboratory or recitation section for the remaining credit hour remains the overwhelming structural choice for handling large numbers of students. There is today the suggestion that the web, interactive computers, and distance learning will reduce the need for large lectures. However, as Marshall McLuhan noted more than 40 years ago, video is a cool medium. Don't like what you see on the computer or television

screen? Is the screen asking you to do work instead of amusing you? The flick of a finger will change it or turn it off. On the other hand, a live teacher, even in a huge lecture hall, is *in your face*. You can't turn him off or make her go away—you have to interact with a flesh-and-blood teacher. Plus, the live lecturer, even in a giant hall, can do something that computers won't be able to do for a long time—inspire students. No student ever said, "Gee, when I grow up I want to be just like Mr. Macintosh here." One can unquestionably learn some things from a computer, but as of yet it is incapable of providing a life-changing insight. Scill, as Mark Twain said about the weather, everybody complains about large lectures, but nobody does anything about them.

Now, perhaps, it is time to do something about large lectures. Good teaching techniques cannot make a big class into a small class, but they can make it a much better class. The same techniques can also save an instructor a substantial amount of time.

I've been teaching large courses for 38 years. Once I reached 20,000 total students, I stopped counting. My largest single public lecture had 3,000 students, my largest class had 1,000 enrollees, and my department chair is no longer startled when she tells me that I'm going to have 300 students in Biology 101 next semester, and I reply, "Oooo—small class; they're just going to rattle around. Can't you dig up some more?" I've also been able to manage a reasonably successful research career, but not without some nimble tightrope walking. I've made every horrendous teaching error you can make, but unlike a surgeon's mistakes, mine just walk away mumbling under their breath and saying nasty things about me. Once I passed my 50th semester of introductory biology, I began to regret that my profession doesn't have a real apprenticeship for teaching—why should every young professor facing his or her first big class (or every old professor dragged kicking and screaming out of the seminar room and into the auditorium) have to make the same painful mistakes I did, and perhaps even more important, why should they not know that everybody goes through the same things and has the same problems? I couldn't think of a good reason, and that's why I decided to write this book.

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MANAGING ASSISTANTS AND GRADERS

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done . . .

—Walt Whitman

One thing graduate school doesn't prepare you to do in academia is to be a boss. And you don't want to share the fate of Whitman's beloved Captain by ending up bleeding on the deck. Large classes frequently involve a staff: readers, lab assistants, lab coordinators, section leaders, and so on. And in the managerial scheme of things, you are their direct supervisor, so when all hell breaks loose, if they have screwed up, you have screwed up, and you will be invited to taste the dishes at the accountability banquet.

We will discuss two main areas: 1) covering your you-know-what (CYA, as the military affectionately refers to it), and 2) getting the most out of your people. They don't necessarily involve the same skills. Doing CYA well usually means that you are managing well too, so there is not necessarily a conflict. Dogbert in the *Dilbert* cartoon is a master at both covering himself *and* managing poorly, but I like to think that he is a bad exception.

Covering Yourself

There are four main areas where mistakes made by your staff can come back to haunt you: 1) Safety: One of your chemistry labs blows up, or a psych experiment goes horribly wrong. 2) Harassment: One of your teaching assistants proposes a grades-for-sex deal to a student. 3) Unfair grading procedures: You receive a complaint from one of your students that your teaching assistant didn't grade her paper according to the course guidelines. 4) General faulty communications: One of your students

complains that she asked a question about a question on an examination, and the proctor gave her incorrect information.

In all of these situations a couple of general guidelines apply. First, it is much worse to be negligent than to make a bad judgment call. The same principle that applies to medical malpractice applies to professional malfeasance in academia: If a professionally trained and certified person could reasonably anticipate some adverse action might take place under a common circumstance and failed to plan for such contingency, or failed to recognize a situation that most similarly trained professionals would, and hence dealt with it in an ineffective way—that constitutes negligence. On the other hand, if the situation presented the professional with a difficult choice of actions where the circumstances were ambiguous and the outcome unclear, if later analysis showed that the professional's decision was an incorrect one—that is an error, but not negligence. Negligence is to be avoided at all costs if you are to CYA well.

Obviously, things are a bit more complex and stressful in an operating theater than an amphitheater, but the same ideas prevail. You are not expected to provide direct supervision of your staff at all times—that defeats the purpose of having a staff. What you *are* expected to do is provide training and procedures such that if they are followed correctly there will be assurance that nothing untoward will happen. Then you are expected to provide routine checks to be sure that those procedures are, in fact, being followed. If you can provide documentation that you have provided this training and have established these procedures, with reasonable follow-up, you have pretty much covered yourself.

The best way to protect yourself *and* make sure that there is a better-than-even chance that things will happen the way you want them to is to put everything in writing, even if it is a bit of an extra pain to do so. Your assistants should, at a minimum, have written safety procedures (which are generally specific to a course or a department) and grading principles (specific to a course). They should also be informed in writing about where they can see the college's harassment policies, or be provided with a copy of the booklet, if there is one.

Safety

This is usually only an issue in laboratory or field courses. At the beginning of the semester, assistants should get a general safety briefing and then be briefed on specific hazards before lab sessions that have particular dangers.

Most institutions, at a minimum, will want you to tell your assistants where the location of the closest phone is and the emergency number; the location of safety appliances such as fire blankets, eye wash fountains, and the like; and the location of the first-aid kit. If a staff person in the department is not responsible for regularly checking during the semester to be sure the kit is full, the fountain works, and so forth, then that responsibility normally falls on the course instructor.

For CYA purposes, there is no such thing as a trivial accident. Any incident involving cuts, burns, animal bites, unconsciousness, or anticipated chemical exposure warrants a call to the rescue wagon. Better to deal with the minor paperwork involved than to deal with a student who suffers a serious infection later from an untreated lab cut. If a student is diffident about receiving such services, the assistant should simply explain that it is standard procedure for all accidents, no matter how minor, and will neither cost the student anything nor require much time. I have found my campus emergency people to be more than cooperative. Because it is a volunteer group, they *like* making calls.

For really minor things (e.g., a superficial cut that immediately stops bleeding) an accident report may not be necessary, but it pays to make sure. Most campuses today have a safety and risk management office, and they can tell you what is or is not reportable. Lest all this sound like unnecessary busy- or paperwork, it cannot compare with the paperwork involved if something goes seriously awry and you *haven't* done the annoying routine stuff.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is taking an increasingly close look at campus policies and procedures on handling hazardous materials and wastes. My campus had to pay a painfully large fine, primarily because there were lapses in paperwork in hazardous materials

procedures. If you handle such materials in your courses, it is wise to personally check the work of any assistants assigned to take care of forms.

Harassment

Although interpretations of what sexual harassment is or is not are still somewhat in a state of flux, and the courts now and then provide novel interpretations, the dust has sufficiently settled such that most campuses have some sort of booklet or statement of regulations available concerning the issue. Sexual harassment is considered discrimination and a civil rights violation. In preparing your briefing for your assistants, this is the place to start.

Unfortunately, not all the language in these documents is unambiguous to all people. For example, "offensive" behavior is prohibited, but people's definition of "offensive" varies widely. If a person is offended by food jokes (to take an absurd example) because she is overweight, that might well be grounds for a harassment complaint against an assistant who told an overeating joke. Such a complaint would likely be dismissed, but in the meantime, there would be endless difficulties for the perpetrator. To be absolutely safe, neither you nor your assistants would ever tell any kind of joke, lest it offend; make any kind of compliment, lest it be interpreted in a sexual way; or have any kind of association with a student outside the classroom. You'd be safe but lousy teachers.

Although the wording of these policies may appear to be draconian, local custom and practice can tell you how strictly the regulations are interpreted on your campus and how much latitude an instructor has in his or her dealings with assistants and students.

When I brief my assistants, who are often the same age or even younger than their students, and for whom it might reasonably be expected that Cupid might wish to practice a little archery in their laboratories, I recognize that some significant fraction of my colleagues married their graduate students, and that love eventually laughs at locksmiths. Therefore I tell them that whatever might happen after the end of the term, course policy is that there be no dating during the semester, nor anything that resembles

dating—that is, no going to, or leaving with students one on one, even to a professional event, such as a seminar. I encourage them to go down to the union for coffee with their students after lab, but when the crowd thins to themselves and one student, then it's time to go home. I used to be concerned only with male assistant/female student arrangements, but now that the concept of same-sex harassment has been established by law, the course rule applies to any combination.

This is a fairly common practice on many campuses. Some campuses go further and prohibit sexual (or potentially sexual) contact between instructors (as well as teaching assistants) and students evermore. Our campus looks the other way, so I tell the assistants that if they find themselves really attracted to one of their students, fine, but they're just going to have to be a secret admirer until the semester is over; then they're on their own. I don't have any qualms about this because my assistants don't write letters of recommendation for students at any time. If assistants do have this ability, then the issue becomes more problematic because it is conceivable that a student asking an assistant for a letter several semesters after a course was over might receive improper pressure to offer something for the letter. This is, however, much more an issue for faculty than assistants.

In recent years, I have noticed a still rare but very awkward new kind of reverse harassment: older male students coming on in an unwanted way to younger female assistants. I brief the assistants that much of this can be prevented by an appropriate professional manner, but because some of my assistants look like they're about 16 years old, this is a little tough. If the situation *should* come up, the teaching assistants have to deal with it in an immediate, crystal-clear, and forceful way. I tell them to inform the student, in as cold a manner as possible, that they have notified me of the unacceptable behavior, that a continuance of the behavior might be grounds for instant dismissal from the university (not true—the appeals procedure is endless), and the likelihood of their becoming a pharmacist or whatever, rather than a day laborer, is strongly dependent on their immediate cessation of whatever it is that they were doing.

Of course, the harassment regulations all apply to *unwelcome* sexually oriented behaviors. *Welcome* solicitations can be expected when you mix a bunch of young, healthy, randy undergraduates and grad students together. This may not be against either the law or campus regulations,

but it most definitely can adversely affect morale among students in the course because there will be inevitable feelings about favoritism, even if there is none. So my policies about nonfraternization apply to both welcome and unwelcome contacts. Something tells me, however, from the number of teaching assistants I see "hooked up" with former students after a semester or so, that this rule is honored more in the breach than the observance.

Grading Procedures

Your name goes on the students' final grade report at the end of the semester, not your assistants'. You, therefore, are the sole determiner of how a student's grade should be decided. However, it may be necessary to farm out part of the grading process to staff, especially in laboratory or recitation sections. Your assistants may not see eye to eye with you on some of your grading practices, and you should certainly listen to what they have to say; but ultimately, the call is yours and has to be something you are comfortable with.

Using assistants for basically mechanical grading procedures, such as multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank exams that the whole class takes, usually presents few problems. It is where the assistants have some discretion that difficulties arise. The overall guideline, where assistants have discretionary powers, is to assure as much as possible that a student's final letter grade would not be different if he or she were in one assistant's section rather than another, or one assistant read his or her essay exam or term paper rather than another.

Where assistants independently grade essays or term papers, training and standardization can greatly reduce problems. Large-class instructors who give essay or short-answer questions that are corrected by assistants often make up a keyword guide for correcting. If there are five keywords (and/or their synonyms) that the instructor is looking for in an essay, the assistants are informed that five words gets five points, four gets four, and so on. This assures absolute standardization, but unfortunately, you're not really correcting an *essay* question any more—it really is a recall-knowledge short-answer question. If you want your assistants to look for things

such as organization, structure, clarity, and completeness—things you would look for in a true essay examination and its questions—then you will have to train your assistants in the techniques I'll show you in Chapter 7 for correcting essays and term papers. These techniques will provide a great deal of consistency in grading from student to student, but your assistants may not be terribly happy with you because they're a lot more time consuming than just looking for keywords or phrases.

If you teach a laboratory course where you have multiple laboratory sections taught by several teaching assistants, you can give your assistants a bit of freedom (and practice) in making up their own questions by simply saying to them something like, "There are 100 total points in lab. I want 50 of those points to be from quizzes, 30 from lab reports, and 20 from a practical exam." You then let them make up their own quizzes. To provide a degree of standardization, have them all compare their quizzes with one another's well before they give them. An assistant who is way out of line, either too easy or too tough, will tend to be brought around to the consensus by peer pressure.

Despite these efforts to standardize, some of your assistants will have more experience than others, and some will simply be more demanding than others. To prevent these differences from having a drastic effect on students' total scores, you can normalize scores between assistants. This is how it works: Let's say we are talking about laboratory sections, and there are 100 points available to students in the labs. Tell each assistant before the semester that they should adjust the difficulty of their assignments such that the *average* score in their sections is as close to, say, 75 points (or in this case, 75%) as possible, but not more than 75. This should be an average across all the assistants' sections. Tell them to keep a running total of their averages so they can adjust the difficulty of their remaining assignments so that by the end of the semester they are as close to (but below) the magic 75 as possible.

Let's say you have three assistants, each of whom has three sections. When the end of the semester is over, one of them has a cumulative average of 74, one 73, and one 72. You give one point to each of the students in the sections of the assistant who has a 74 average. His or her average is now 75. You give two points to each of the students in the sections of the assistant who has a 73 average. His or her average is now 75. You give

three points to each of the students in the sections of the assistant who has a 72 average. His or her average is now 75. You have normalized all the assistants' scores, and that should cancel out any differences in grades between sections caused by differences in assistants' grading practices.

There are, however, several difficulties with this scheme that might rule it out for you. First, it assumes that any differences in scores between sections, where the assistants make up and grade their own quizzes, are due to assistants' grading practices. This might not be true. Some sections might have a higher proportion of majors that attract high-caliber students, and thus the sections will have better scores because the students are better. Second, you might have assistants who have trouble easing the difficulty of their assignments and end up with something like a 63 average. When you normalize, the better students will then end up with more than 100%. Conversely, you might have an assistant who has trouble raising difficulty and ends up with an 83 average. Statistically, you could just take eight points away from every student in that assistant's sections, but you could hear the student howls on the moon once the students were told that points were taken away because their assistant was too easy. There are ways that you could perform additional normalizations to compensate for these factors, but the resultant grading scheme would be so complex it wouldn't make any sense to the students. I do a simple normalization and keep regular track of the assistants' running averages so that neither I nor the students have any unpleasant surprises by the end of the semester.

General Communications

A typical problem is a student coming to you at the end of the semester complaining about a final grade and saying that his section leader told him that if he got a certain score in the section, then he would end up with a certain final letter grade for the course. What the assistant undoubtedly failed to mention is that the student would also have to receive a corresponding score in the lecture assignments. Ultimately, this miscommunication is your fault because you didn't adequately communicate what the grading procedures were to your assistant, and you did-

n't adequately communicate the course requirements to the student. However, if it was stated clearly in your handout material what the policy was, the discussion can end right there.

The best way to deal with this and other problems involving miscommunication is by putting everything in writing *and* having regular (and repetitive, if necessary) briefings with your assistants. In the case just described, a general instruction that students should not be promised definite grades based on their lab scores alone should have been made at the beginning of the semester.

A similar situation arises when assistants are proctoring an examination. If a student asks a question about a question, the assistants will naturally try to be helpful, but they might not have been at the lecture where you covered the material in the question and so might not realize your spin on the subject—and thus fail to give the student your interpretation of the question. These situations can be reduced by going over the examination with the assistants in advance and telling them that if they have *any* doubt about what answer to give to the student, they should contact you during the exam and have you talk to the student.

What happens if you have done all of the above and the assistant either didn't read the written material or was in a fog when you talked about it? Well, this is why the captain is paid extra to make judgment calls. If the student makes a reasonable case *and* when you talk to the assistant it seems plausible that the student was, in fact, misinformed, you might have to make an adjustment. Do you automatically raise the student's grade? No. How do you know that even if the student was informed correctly about the question or the situation, he or she would have done better? What you might do is give the student a second chance to demonstrate that he or she indeed does know the material in question. Give the student a reasonable time, and say that you'll give him or her an oral quiz on the disputed area.

Delegating Authority

If you have 500 students and 10 assistants, you will have to assign responsibility for some decisions to your staff. However, it is very important that

they know *exactly* what their discretionary powers are, what your reaction will be if a student challenges their authority, and what they should do if a situation falls outside the guidelines.

A typical situation often arises in grading term papers. The assistants actually read and assign scores to the papers. Invariably, students will compare notes and come to you complaining that they were graded unfairly because a classmate in another section wrote a similar quality paper and got a different grade.

The impact of most such situations can be minimized with forethought. I tell my assistants that if students have complaints about grades they received in a section, they should feel free to come to me, but my role is like that of an appellate judge in the legal system. An appellate judge will never overrule determinations of fact made by a judge or a jury, but will overrule if there have been procedural errors. I tell both assistants and students that because I don't actually read each and every one of their papers, and comparison judging is almost unavoidable in subjective judgments, I am not in as good a position as the assistant to judge relative quality. Therefore, I won't do it. If the student alleges that there has been some irregularity in the procedure of assigning a topic, or some bias in the judgment process, I might overrule, but that's it.

This policy has a number of advantages. First, it gives the assistants a lot more confidence in their decisions, knowing that I trust them enough not to second-guess them. Second, it eliminates a lot of whining complaints. Finally, it is the truth—I really can't judge relative quality without having seen a large sample of other papers, and of course, the problem doesn't come up until after papers have been returned to students.

Does this policy mean that assistants will never make bad calls? No. Sometimes a student will come to me with a complaint, and for the life of me I can't understand why the assistant graded the way he or she did, even with all the standardization training the assistant received. This situation usually arises on an assignment like a term paper, where subjective qualities like "style" are involved. So, do I override the assistant? No, because if I did, I'd violate every principle of delegation of authority. Once word got around, I'd have to look at every student's paper that didn't receive an A. I stick to my policy guns. Needless to say, the student is

not terribly happy with me. Then I go to the student's assistant and have an intensive retraining session. When the time comes for the assignment of final letter grades, if I see that the disputed assignment is the only thing keeping the affected student from the next higher grade, I'll use executive prerogative to kick the student up over the line. The result is that it won't happen again with the same assistant. I don't have to deal with a flood of other fishing-expedition complainants, and justice is ultimately done. The student is still unhappy with me because he doesn't know about the last-minute save, but what the heck, you can't always please everybody.

Assistants are informed at the beginning of the semester that there are potentially touchy situations that they should inform me about *immediately* if they come up because it is neither their obligation nor responsibility to handle them. Suspected cheating is one such situation. Others might include a student acting in an erratic manner or having difficult personal problems. Repeated absences. Questionable excuses for absences. Harassment issues. I usually review this list at the first briefing of the semester.

Motivating the Staff

If you have a well-motivated, well-trained staff, you can enjoy many benefits. Your work is easier because your people will do what they're supposed to do, and do it well. Students will think more highly of the course (and you, at student evaluation time). The number of brush fires you will have to put out during the semester will be smaller.

There are no secrets to having assistants get with the program. Common sense and common consideration will take care of almost everything. I usually start the semester off with an icebreaker party at my house within the first week or two of class. Nothing elaborate—just an informal setting for the assistants to get to know me, and one another. When we have an exam grading session, I provide the doughnuts and coffee. I make sure that they are trained in their jobs well enough so that they can approach their classes with confidence.

If you are teaching a first-year course, many of your assistants are likely to be first-year graduate students and may need a bit of hand-holding. Facing a class for the first time is often a terrifying experience, and the more information you can give them in your first meeting, the more confident they will be when that awesome moment comes. If they have all the course procedures and guidelines in writing, their anxiety will be notably reduced.

It is important for them to know early in the game that you are there for support should they need it. Let them know that if there is a difficult or confusing situation with a student, that you will be more than receptive if they bring it to your attention. It's also not a bad idea if you are generally familiar with the bureaucracies they will have to deal with to get their personal life squared away at the beginning of the semester—housing, payroll, registrar, and the like.

You will also need to be aware of the fact that almost all of them will face a conflict between your desires as their teaching supervisor, and their major professors' demands for their time spent on research. At most institutions, it has never really been resolved whether a teaching assistantship is a scholarship or a job (or some kind of monstrous hybrid). The poor assistant is caught in the middle.

It sometimes works out that not all the collective responsibilities, such as grading papers, can be equally parceled out. If that should happen, let the affected assistant know that you are aware of the situation and try to arrange that the next time such an activity comes about, you will assign that assistant proportionately less work.

When all is said and done, your assistants are your *assistants*, not your colleagues. Because you are the accountable person, you are granted reasonable powers to supervise. You don't want your assistants to think that Soc 100 is a landlocked version of the hell ship *HMS Bounty*, but neither do you want them to be able to feel that they are doing you a personal favor by proctoring your examinations. Clear, complete instructions, thorough briefings, explicit expectations, and comprehensive guidelines will go a long way toward making Soc 100, if not the *Love Boat*, at least a happy ship.