Being a TA:
The Roles You Might Play
Possible Roles

- Office Hour Master
- STATA TA
- Lead TA
- Advisor
- Lab TA
- Distance Ed Guru
- Grader
- Teacher
- Mentor
- Grad Student
- Cheerleader
You may find yourself leading a lab, which could involve

- Leading a discussion
- Facilitating a discussion
- Facilitating an activity
- Answering questions
- Giving a short lecture
Office Hour Master

You may find yourself running an office hour, which could involve:

- Answering questions
- Leading a discussion
- Giving a short lecture
STATA TA

You may find yourself leading a STATA lab, which could involve:

- Answering questions/computer help
- Leading a discussion
- Giving a short lecture
Lead TA

You might be

- Answering questions
- Giving a short lecture
- Coordinating labs or other TAs
- Developing answer keys
- Working with the instructor
- Visibly responsible
Grader

You may find yourself grading

- Problem Sets
  - give feedback
- Exams
  - Use pen
  - Circle correct answer
  - X out their incorrect answer
  - Put score on front (with positive feedback)
- Confidentiality
- Academic Ethics
Distance Ed Guru

You may find yourself working online, with

- Bulletin boards
- TA office hours
- LiveTalk sessions
- Homework
Other Roles

- **Teacher**
  - Help understand the material
  - Learning techniques
- **Advisor** – nurture, support
- **Mentor**
- **Grad Student** – keep your own life in check
- **Cheerleader** – give positive feedback
Types of Classes

Examples:

- Small – Biostat PhD and Masters classes
- Medium – 650’s, LDA, MLM
- Large - 620’s
Small Classes

- Learn everyone's name.
- Develop lab content to highlight key concepts – practice problems, original code, etc.
- Tailor labs to address issues you see in the problem sets.
Small Classes (cont’d)

- Open door policy in addition to scheduled labs/office hours – learn to say, “Sorry I'm busy right now. Please come back ____.”
- If you hold office hours in your office, warn your officemates first
Medium Classes

- Have some material prepared to discuss in lab in case of no questions.
- Stick to course material – don't need to help with someone's thesis.
- Combination of Large and Small issues.
Large Classes

- Labs/Office Hours can vary dramatically in size.
- Many students don't know you or your name and you may not know their names.
- Multiple TAs in one room.
- Don't get stressed about STATA – most problems are typos.
Q&A over Email

- When responding to emails keep it short
  - Someone else may be working on it simultaneously
- Either post answers to BBS or reply to entire class with student’s name removed
- Fine line between being a good TA and being overwhelmed
Common Themes

- Be prepared
- Be enthusiastic
- Communicate
- Don’t try to do everything at once
- Don’t be intimidated
- Control your own life
- ENJOY!