

# CMPS 7010 – Fall 17

## *PhD & TA Orientation*

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# CS PhD at Tulane

- New PhD program with 8 students total so far.
- The PhD program policies are available here:  
<http://www2.tulane.edu/sse/cs/academics/graduate/>
- Work with your advisor on research. Start now, do literature search, get familiar with the topic. It can take a year to identify a research direction that is feasible to make progress on.
- Contact me for any other questions (PhD milestones, course transfers, ...)

# TAs and RAs

- PhD students in our program are either teaching assistants (TAs) or research assistants (RAs).
- RAs are supported by research grants from their advisor.
- TAs usually support class instructors by teaching lab sessions, grading, etc.
- Later in the program, TAs might teach classes themselves. This experience may be useful when pursuing a career in academia.
- Both as a TA or RA you are a university employee who has to uphold standards of integrity and perform assigned duties. Contact me for any questions.

# TA Responsibilities

- Know what the instructor has covered in the classes leading up to your lab section.
- Bring examples that will help students understand the material better.
- Be ready to present extra examples and/or supplementary material based on student questions.

# TA Expectations

- Be well prepared for your lab. TAs are role models to students.
- TAs are expected to dress and behave professionally.
- You are required to hold each lab session in its full length and may not let the class go early.
- The grading of exams is typically done in collaboration between TAs and the instructor.

# Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Do things that scale
- Automate routine work
- Keep future in mind = keep notes, develop teaching portfolio
- Not every question needs an answer
- You have the right and the responsibility to enforce course rules
- Take good care of yourself, keep balance between two roles (educating yourself and helping educate others)

# Consistent Grading

- Grade a few works in pencil before starting “real” grading
- When stuck, move on and revisit
- Grade in one sitting, consistency is the key, be prepared to defend your decisions, don’t sweat 1%.
- When in doubt consult the instructor.

# Helpful Feedback

- Help students learn instead of penalizing them
- Correct and deduct points for all incorrections but give written feedback for top-3 issues
- Avoid deducting points without explanation
- Criticize work, not the person, avoid “you”
- **Give positive feedback**



# Own Your Work And Be a Colleague

- Propose your solutions to problems (instead of asking for solutions)
- Arrange for absence
- Communicate frequently with your course instructor and advisor, keep them informed
- Conflict/bullying - involve instructor
- Ideas, initiatives, connections, projects - bring them up

# As a Tulane Employee

- Protect students' personal information, including grades (FERPA)
- Students' work belongs to them
- Avoid close personal relationships with people you grade, tutoring for pay, accepting gifts
- Watch for Honor Code violations, report violations to the course instructor
- Watch for students in distress, report students in trouble to course instructor