



Sara Axtell

Lecturer

In my work with students, I seek to create a space where we can bring our whole, authentic selves and the knowledge that has grown out of our experiences. We work together to develop an understanding of families and communities that acknowledges and values community assets and knowledge. We share the responsibility to pose critical questions. In my classes, you can expect a lot of large and small group discussion and reflective writing.

While my focus in the department is on teaching in the undergraduate program, I occasionally serve on committees for graduate students who are working on community-engaged research. I can share connections and strategies for developing community partnerships and for working with community partners at all stages of the research process. When I am working with a student in this capacity, I expect that we will meet at least once a semester to check in about the progress on your project, and will rely on you to contact me about scheduling additional meetings as needed. Email is a fine way to reach me for regular communications, but text or cell phone are fine as well if there is a more urgent issue to discuss. I appreciate two weeks of lead time to review student writing.

I also enjoy working with graduate teaching assistants. Teaching assistants who work with me can expect to share your experiences and knowledge, and hopefully expand your skills for utilizing participatory pedagogies. Here are some specific expectations that I hold for TAs.

Responsibilities and time expectations per week:

- Course planning: If possible, I appreciate you reviewing the syllabus before the beginning of the course and making any suggestions you have about additional frameworks and readings that would be helpful. One thing I appreciate about working with a teaching assistant is that students have the benefit of both of our approaches and the knowledge that we each bring.
- Attending class and debriefing: I expect you to attend each class, contributing questions to class discussion, and helping to facilitate and “hold the space” for discussion. As needed, we will debrief about group dynamics within the class. (3 hours)
- Regular meetings: Typically, I meet with teachings assistants either weekly or biweekly to discuss the progress of the class. (30 minutes)
- Office hours and student email: There may be a number of reasons that students are more comfortable reaching out to their teaching assistant than to their instructor. I ask that you try to respond to student emails within 48 hours, and keep one office hour, either in person or on-line every other week. I ask that you monitor your time on student email closely so that we can make sure you are not overburdened by this. Note that I keep several office hours each week and you are welcome to refer students to me as well. (2 hours)
- Grading: Typically, TAs and I each do one half of the grading for each course assignment. We will discuss in advance about standards for each assignment, and confer about difficult-to-grade assignments at our regular meetings. I ask TAs to use the “speed-grader” function in canvas and refrain from saving any student work on your own computer. (4 hours)

Contributions:

I welcome teaching assistants to plan and lead learning activities during the course, including in-class activities, course assignments or on-line learning modules. We will discuss the plan for these activities

and debrief the activities in our regular meetings. I am happy to complete formal teaching observations for you and we can talk about ways to create teaching products for your portfolio based on your work in the course.