New CA Training

Stanford Computer Science Department

Fall 2017 – 2018

David Hyde, Jason Riggs

CS Department CA Mentors

Stanford

Computer Science

agenda

- University policies
- Your duties as a Course Assistant
- Effective teaching
- Additional resources
- Your questions

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university policies

- University Policies
  - The honor code
  - Students with disabilities
  - Sexual harassment

https://oae.stanford.edu/video-resource-teaching-assistants

honor code

- Agreed to by every student and faculty member
  - https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/

honor code

- It is your responsibility not to put students in a position to violate the Honor Code
- Reduce the temptation to cheat:
  - Clearly state permitted types of aid and collaboration
  - Don’t reuse old assignments
  - Provide plenty of practice material
  - Set intermediate milestones for large projects
- Honor Code violations do happen!
  - If you suspect a violation, talk to the professor
  - The Honor Code prohibits penalty grading

honor code

- Agreed to by every student and faculty member
  - https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/
- Computer Science Honor Code
  - http://csmajor.stanford.edu/HonorCode.shtml
  - http://stanfordvideo.stanford.edu/stream/oja/hc-computer_science.html

cs dept honor code

"In computer science courses, it is usually appropriate to ask others... for hints and debugging help or to talk generally about problem-solving strategies and program structure.

In fact, students are strongly encouraged to seek such assistance when needing it."

cs dept honor code

- Guidelines for students:
  - Indicate on your submission any assistance you received
  - Never share actual code with others
  - Do not look at solutions/code from previous years
  - Be prepared to explain any program code you submit

students with disabilities

- Student must initiate request for special aid with the Office of Accessible Education (not the CA)
  - http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae
  - Typically, students receive extra time on exams or take them in a different setting

- Things you can do to help:
  - Read what is written on the board as you write it
  - Face and speak to the class, not the board
  - Handouts in electronic format are easier to read

oae sample letter

OFFICE OF ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION
STANFORD UNIVERSITY
563 SALVATIERRA WALK
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-8540

650/725-5301 FAX 650/723-1066 VOICE 650/723-1067 TDD

CONFIDENTIAL STUDENT INFORMATION

Date: May 12, 2010, Spring Quarter '09 – '10

To: Professors, Teaching Assistants & Teaching Fellows

From: Teri A. Adams, J.D., Assistant Director
teri.adams@stanford.edu, 725-2490

Re: Academic Accommodations

sexual harassment

- Unwelcome sexual advances, inappropriate jokes, ...
- or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:
  - Implicit or explicit suggestion that submission to or rejection of conduct will factor into academic evaluation
  - Conduct interferes with individual's academic environment
- http://harass.stanford.edu

sexual harassment

- In relationships between individuals in inherently unequal positions (teacher-student, coach-athlete, etc.), the person in the position of greater power bears the primary burden of accountability.
  - This person is required to notify their supervisor so that alternative evaluative arrangements can be made if needed.
  - Failure to do so is a violation of the policy
- http://harass.stanford.edu

thought experiments

- Imagine yourself in the same situation as Karen. How would you respond if a student made an inappropriate comment towards you?
- After giving a midterm, you receive an email from a student, who says the people in front of her were whispering during the exam.
- A student requests an extension because of a learning disability.
  - What if the student had had a bicycle accident? Family emergency?

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course assistant duties

- Course communication and administration
- Homework, exams, solution sets
- Grading and grade tracking
- Office hours, sections, reviews
- A historical note:
  - CA = Course Assistant, TA = Teaching Assistant
  - Same commitment and compensation, but assistants who will teach new material are designated TAs

time commitment

- 25% CA
  - 10 hours/week, 2 hours of office hours
- 50% CA
  - 20 hours/week, 4 hours of office hours
  - May only register for 10 units of courses
- Time commitment is an average
  - You will work more during some weeks, less during others

starting the quarter

- Meet with the professor!
  - Establish goals, duties, and expectations
- Set up course communication means
  - Ideally by first day of the quarter
  - Course web page
  - Mailing lists and newsgroups

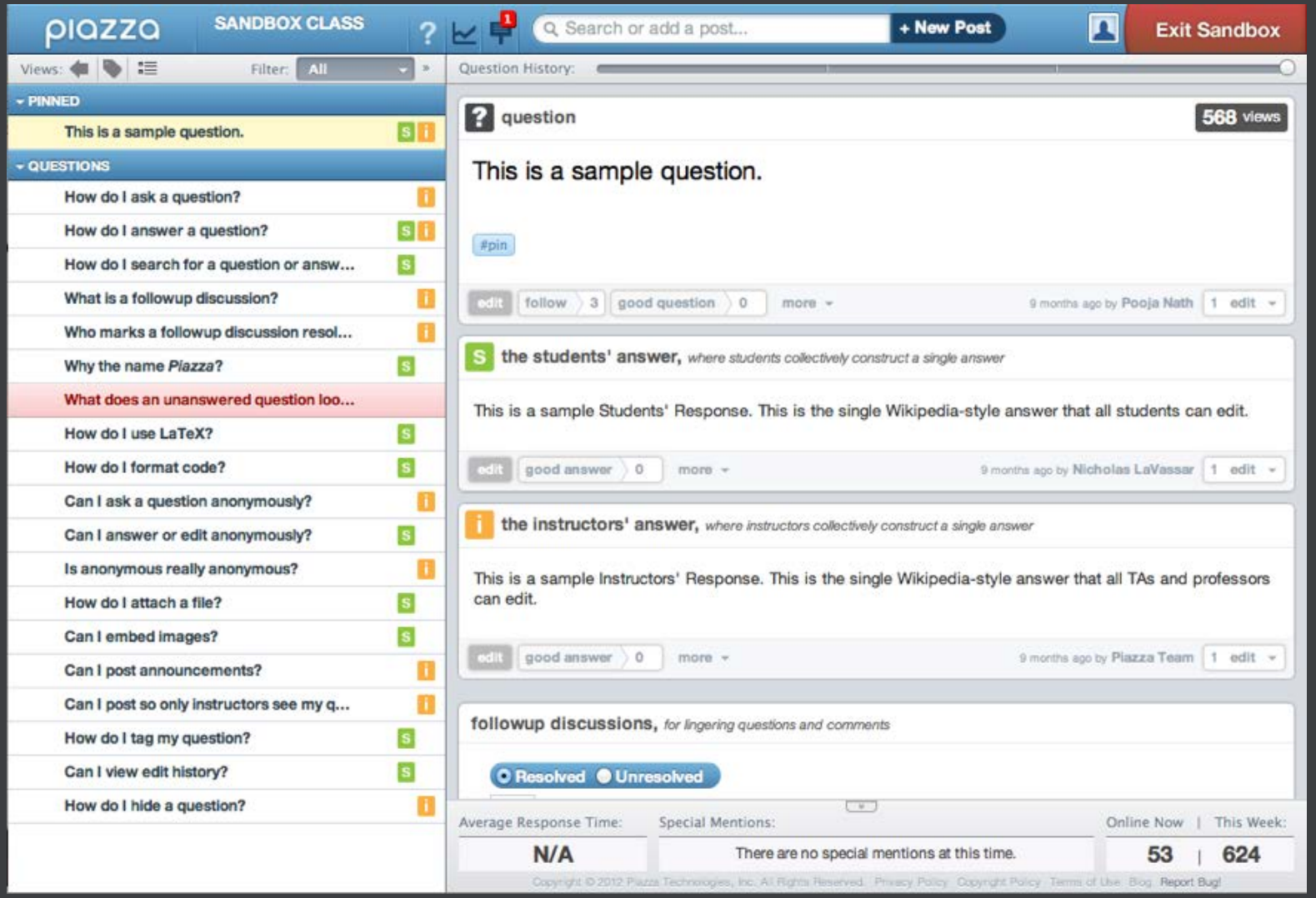
course information

- Prepare & deliver course info on the first day of class:
  - Meeting times and location
  - Teaching staff: office location/hours, contact info
  - Course description, prerequisites, textbooks
  - Late policy, collaboration policy, grading policy
  - Schedule of exams, major projects, assignments

communication with students

- Many different flavors
  - Web page, class email lists, newsgroup, Piazza, in-class announcements...
- Method not as important as establishing a consistent means of communication
  - Professor may already have a preferred method
- Someone must maintain it

piazza - online q&a



http://www.piazza.com

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email communication

- Students will email you... a lot!
- Respond in a timely manner, but:
- Manage the load
  - Divide responsibility among course staff
  - Set expectations for turnaround time
  - Suggest use of office hours, especially if the questions are difficult to answer via email
  - Compile and make available answers to FAQs

grading

- Should be done in a timely manner
  - Return graded assignment before the next one is due
  - Pick a weekly time when CAs grade together
    - Or, take turns grading week to week.
- Should be consistent and fair
  - Agree on grading criteria beforehand
  - The same person grades a question across all students
  - Read through a few solutions before starting

grading

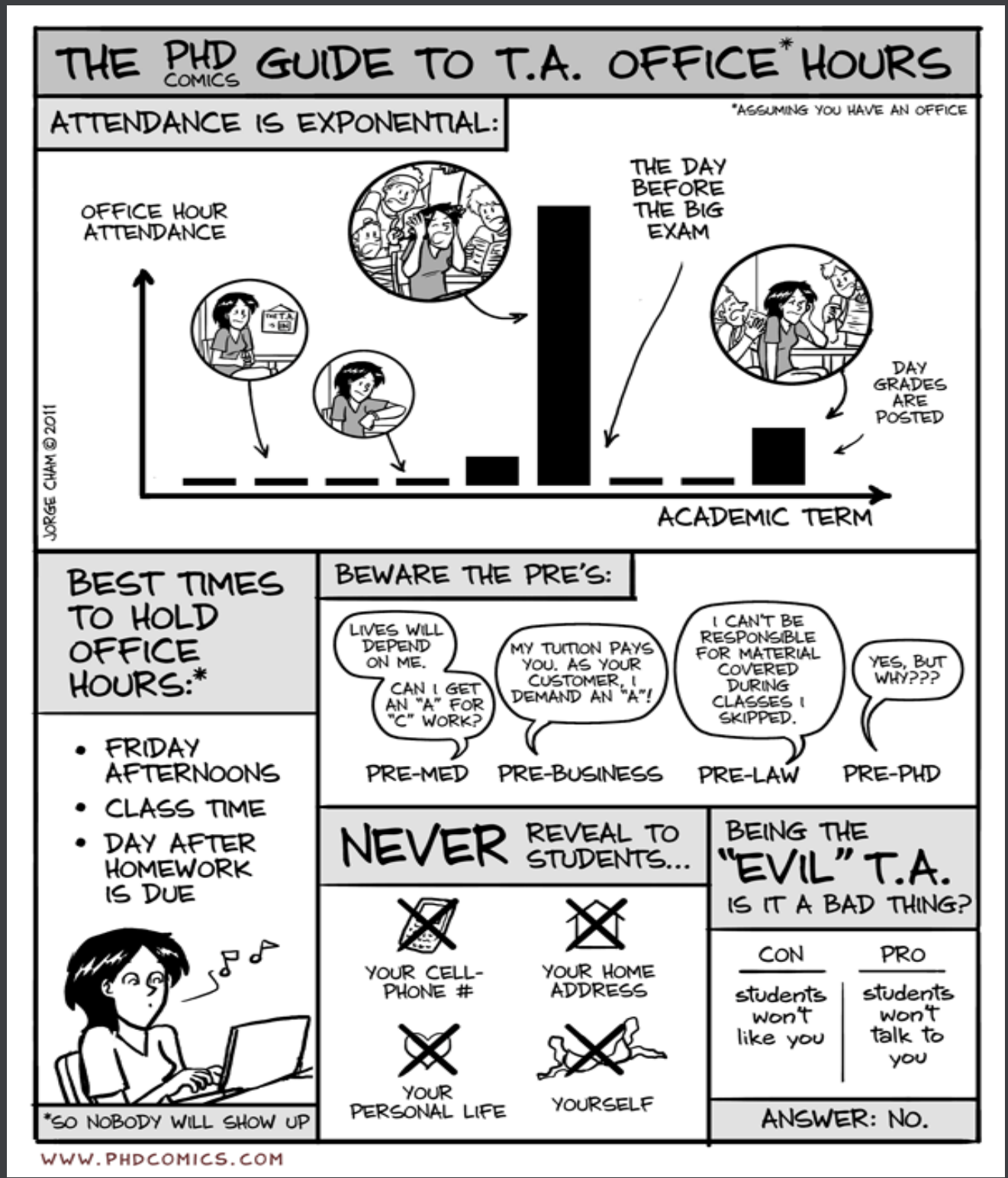
- Rubrics help enormously.
  - Increase fairness, efficiency; requires some "preprocessing" but is totally worth it.
- Point distribution
  - Prefer 0, +1, +2 over 75.25, 75.5, etc.
- Provide solution sets
  - List common mistakes, point distributions.
  - Some professors may be hesitant to post solutions.

re-grading

- How should I handle re-grading requests?
  - Permissive – Point-monger paradise, CA nightmare
  - Risky Game – Reserve the right to re-grade everything
  - Bureaucratic Nightmare – Require written justification
  - Lazy Evaluation – Defer until the end of the term; regrade if the points affect the student's final grade.
- Do not re-grade with the student present!
  - Listen to their explanation, then ask them to leave the graded work with you

grade tracking

- Spreadsheet (Excel, Calc, Numbers...)
- Google docs spreadsheet
  - Facilitates multi-user editing and collaboration, versioning
  - But: privacy!
- Canvas
- Gradescope
- ... other tools available.



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office hours

- Inform students of times and locations
  - Use course web page and mailing lists
  - Ideally by second week of class

- Office hour times - when should I hold them?
  - Your convenience?
  - Students' convenience?
  - Adjust hours according to students' needs
  - Be on time and don't cancel at the last minute
  - Announce any changes through course communication

office hours

- Office hour locations - where should I hold them?
  - Your own office is OK, provided it is accessible
  - Gates B24 and B26 - two cubicles per room
    - Managed on Google calendar, Meredith will ask for a Gmail address
    - Visit Gates 176 to get your Gates building key reprogrammed, or to get a key if you need one
    - Exterior doors are locked after 5:30pm and on weekends – remind students to carry their Stanford ID card
  - Library or computer clusters (Gates B08, B30)
  - Other? Bytes, Coupa, Skype, ...

office hours

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office hours

- Preparation is key!
  - Attend lectures to keep up with what's going on
  - Read the assignments and understand the solutions
  - Prepare hints or milestones for completing assignments
- Encourage attendance
  - e.g. write a note on a struggling student's problem set
- Be reassuring and patient
- Be open to suggestions and feedback

prof-ca relationship

- Meet and talk often
  - Open, honest, and respectful dialogue makes life easier
  - Discuss who is doing what and when
  - Never assume something unassigned will get done
- Seek and communicate student feedback
  - Students tend to be more candid with their CAs
  - Solicit feedback early to help improve the course
  - Communicate student feedback tactfully (i.e., professors are people too.)

evaluations

- CAs receive official department evaluation
- Ask for feedback and suggestions
  - In office hours or through a feedback form
  - Ask fellow CAs to attend your section and give feedback
- VPTL evaluations
  - Small group evaluations
  - Online mid-quarter evaluations
  - DVD recording and one-on-one coaching
  - https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/teaching-services

SCPD Courses

- Give a contact phone number during office hours
  - Prefer an office number over a personal cell number
  - Google Hangout link?
- Know your SCPD course policy
  - Send assignments/exams promptly
- Bonus: watch yourself on video to see how you can improve!

counseling students

- Students may sometimes seek counsel beyond simple academic matters

- Offer support:
  - Listen
  - Express concern
  - Be empathic and understanding

counseling students

- Know your limits – your responsibilities are academic in nature
  - Make issues known to the professor
  - Suggest tutoring and academic support
    - http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/cgi-bin/drupal_ual/ARS_index.html
  - Suggest counseling and psychological services
    - http://vaden.stanford.edu/caps/our-services
  - Suggest peer counseling and support
    - http://thebridge.stanford.edu

tl; dnr: be professional

questions about duties?

- Course communication and administration
- Homework, exams, solution sets
- Grading and grade tracking
- Office hours, sections, reviews
- Feedback and suggestions
- SCPD Courses
- Struggling students...

thought experiment

- It’s the night before the problem set is due. Your office hours are packed because poor wording on the assignment has made the question confusing. Angry comments are starting to pile up on Piazza. It’s chaos. The prof is out of town and unreachable. What do you do?

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effective teaching

- Teaching Awards
  - Centennial Teaching Assistant Award (Stanford)
  - Forsythe Memorial Teaching Award (Computer Science)
- Ph.D. with distinction in teaching
  - 10 units (“250%”) CAship or Teaching Fellow
  - At least one course as Teaching Fellow where you have primary responsibility of organization and teaching

what makes a great CA?

what makes a great CA?

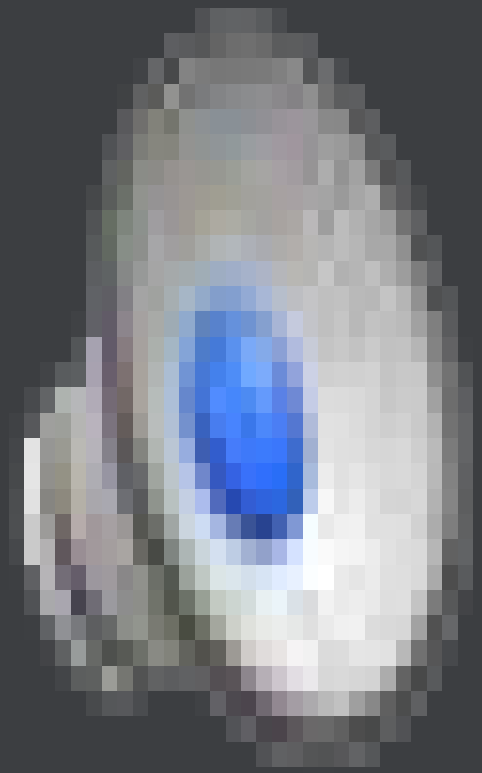
- Preparation and organization
- Knowledge of the course material
- Communication skills
- Accessibility and availability
- Concern for students' learning
- A good relationship with the professor

effective teaching

Movie time!

Thoughts?

Thoughts?



Thoughts?

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CS Department

- CS Educational Affairs
  - Meredith Hutchin (hutchin@cs)

CS Department

Nan Aoki (nanaoki@stanford.edu, Gates 187)

- Copy codes for course materials
- Classroom reservations
- Equipment loans:
  - Projector, computer, TV, DVD, etc.
  - Provide 2 days notice

Claire Stager (stager@cs, Gates 182)

- CA textbook library (quarterly loans)
- Food and drinks for midterm/final exam grading

CS Department

Computer Science CA Mentors

Teaching/organizational help, anything else!

David Hyde
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Jason Riggs
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- Formerly the CTL - Center for Teaching & Learning
- Provides resources to promote excellence in teaching and student learning
  - Classroom evaluations and videotaping
  - Focused training sessions
  - Teaching tips and handouts
  - Lunchtime lectures and workshops

http://teachingcommons.stanford.edu

online - sutacs

- Repository of useful CA information:

  http://sutacs.stanford.edu

  - New CA information (including these slides)
  - Course Assistant information sheet
  - Mass grading tips
  - Links to policies and guidelines

- For quick tips, see:

  http://cs.stanford.edu/academics/course-assistants-cas/current-cas

questions about resources?

- Computer Science Department
- VPTL (formerly CTL)
- SUTACS

What did we miss?

what makes a great CA?

- Passive Assistant
  - Less work
- Active Partner
  - Much more enjoyable and rewarding
  - Establish good relationships
  - Students prefer CAs that care
  - Doesn‘t necessarily imply a major time sink
- Be an active partner and enjoy your time CA’ing!

lots more support...

- Use your resources!
  - VPTL (workshops & teaching feedback)
  - Mentors in Teaching - MinT - Program
  - Professors & other CAs
- Further mentoring...
  - Coffee/tea, one-on-one meetings, groups, ...
  - Ideas?

Homework:

- Get prepared - talk to your prof & fellow CAs, course website, schedule staff meetings, ...
- Check out CS TAs website:
  - http://sutacs.stanford.edu
  - http://cs.stanford.edu/academics/course-assistants-cas/current-cas
- Check out the VPTL resources website:
  - https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/
- Have fun!