

The History Department Guidelines for Graduate Assistant Absences

Exceptional circumstances sometimes necessitate missing your class. In some cases you can plan for the absence, in others cases there might be an illness or a sudden emergency. In most cases, it is the responsibility of the teaching assistant (TA), if necessary with the assistance of the Issues Coordinator (for Issues/Perspectives) or Course Supervisor (for multi-section surveys) to arrange coverage of missed classes.

In the case of a **planned absence** (for example, to attend a scholarly conference), you should consult ahead of time with the Issues Coordinator or Course Supervisor about why, when, and for how long you will be away, and what alternative arrangements you are making for your students' instruction.

In the case of an **illness or family crisis**, contact the Issues Coordinator or Course Supervisor as soon as possible by telephone and email with the following information: your class's meeting time and place, when you think you expect to be able to return to the classroom, who might be able to cover for you, and how to reach you while you're out. (Do not assume the message has gotten through until you get a reply from the Issues Coordinator or Course Supervisor.)

If you cannot reach the Issues Coordinator or Course Supervisor and the class is imminent, call the History office (335-2299) so a **cancellation announcement** can be posted on the classroom door. Then continue your efforts to reach the Issues Coordinator or Course Supervisor.

In cases when several "working days" or class periods must be missed, the Department may be able to secure additional funds from the College to hire a substitute instructor.

What kinds of occurrences warrant absence from the classroom are often matters of judgment. Faculty members regularly make the same judgments themselves, and you should not hesitate to ask the Issues Supervisor or another professor for advice. Note the COGs agreement specifies your right to a limited number of days of paid leave and to paid sick leave, family illness leave and bereavement leave. (See the COGS contract at (<https://cogs.org/current-contract>). In any case, remember your primary professional responsibility is to your students and their education. Students lose out when instructors miss classes.

It is wise, in planning your course, to identify a relevant video in the Main Library's collection in case of emergency. Consider also building a support group among TAs teaching similar courses, with whom you exchange syllabi and discuss your courses, so you can cover for each other if the need arises. It can be helpful, too, to have an email list of your students so they can be reached in the event of last minute emergencies and cancellations.

The teacher is responsible for meeting classes at the scheduled time and for ending classes at the scheduled time. If extra class sessions or make-up classes are needed, they should be scheduled to accommodate all students so no student is penalized because of conflicts with other scheduled academic or professional commitments. As a TA, you will be expected to follow the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' teaching policies, which are described at <https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty> (see Undergraduate Teaching Policies and Resources).