



Stuck Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Juggling Teaching and Research

Yikes! Panic Attack!

—You've got 30 essay exams to grade and a seminar paper due Monday.

—Your advisor wants those numbers crunched by tomorrow afternoon and you're leading a lab section in the morning.

—The journal editor needs that rewrite now and you haven't finished your lectures for next week.

What gets the short end of the stick—your teaching or your research? That's the question CTL director Michele Marinovich asked a panel of young academics during Teaching Week last spring.

Each member of CTL's panel had different tricks for juggling teaching and research. But all felt the stress of the academic balancing act. Here's the advice—and sympathetic comments—of TA Diana Cordova from Psychology, second-year History professor Karen Sawislak, and newly tenured professor John Bravman from Materials Science and Engineering. Communication professor Jeremy Cohen also kindly offered advice in a later interview.

OVERWHELMED? JOIN THE CLUB

• *Even Stanford geniuses haven't discovered a magic formula for juggling teaching and research. If you're conscientious, you may never feel the balance is right. One emeritus, professor who was known as a great scholar and teacher, confessed, "The whole 40 years I was at Stanford, I felt enormous tension between the two. I never figured out how to combine them."*

• *Feeling stressed is natural; it's part of trying to do two jobs well. Research and teaching take different*

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Welcome to CTL

My name is Mark Gonnerman. I am the new Coordinator of Teaching Assistant Training at the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and I am writing to introduce myself and our services for Stanford TAs.

I came to Stanford in 1987 after earning my master's degree at Harvard, where I studied theology and comparative religions. At Harvard I was a teaching fellow in East Asian Studies for two years, teaching a sophomore tutorial in premodern Japanese history. At Stanford I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Religious Studies. When I am not at CTL (mine is a part-time position), I am writing my dissertation in philosophy of religion. I am married and have a one-year-old son.

I became interested in teaching and learning issues when, as an undergraduate in the alternative Paracollege at St. Olaf College in Minnesota, I designed my own major and pursued my studies in one-on-one and small-group tutorial settings. I think a liberal arts education is about cultivating intellectual virtues that enable life-long learning, and my

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Teaching Problems? Write CTL

How do I start a discussion? Does this student have a crush on me? Should I give pop quizzes?

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We'll answer your letter in our new advice column in the next *TA Talk*.

Address your letter to: Dear CTL, 110 Sweet Hall, Stanford, 94305-3087

Juggling Teaching and Research *(continued)*

talents. Many of us assume good researchers make good teachers. But more than 50 studies on the relationship of research productivity and teaching effectiveness show "little or no correlation between the two," reports CTL director Marinovich

- *See your stress positively; it means you're still trying to do both jobs well.* Give yourself a pat on the back—especially if you're a new TA trying to learn teaching and research skills at the same time.

INTEGRATE TEACHING AND RESEARCH

- *Learn for yourself as you teach.* Karen Sawislak suggests putting books and articles you want to read on your course lists. She says that's the only way she got any research done her first year at Stanford.

- *TA courses now that you'd like to teach later.* Diana Cordova has already fulfilled her department's student teaching requirement. But she's volunteering to TA "Psychology and Gender" because she wants to collect materials for a future course of her own. That's a smart move according to Karen Sawislak. Sawislak brought several courses with her from Yale. "Do as much as you can to build a teaching base now before you begin lecturing full-time," she advises TAs.

- *Involve students in your research.* Diana Cordova uses the Psychology Department newsletter to invite students to help her conduct research. "For me, it's an important part of teaching outside of the classroom," she says. "The students help me, but they learn how to design and carry out experiments. And they get a one-to-one relationship with a mentor in their area of interest."

- *Share research responsibilities with top students.* Diana Cordova volunteers to advise undergraduates writing honors theses in her research specialty. Now two of her five publications are co-authored by student advisees.

- *Look for unexpected connections.* Myra Strober, who teaches Economics in the School of Education, noticed students often misinterpreted the graphs she gave them. When she began to explore her students' difficulties, she discovered they were repeating many of the errors classical economists made while developing the field.

DON'T LET UP

- *Work like you're an entrepreneur starting your own business.* "Abandon all hope of sleep,"

joked John Bravman, who worked 70-75 hour weeks as an assistant professor in Materials Science. Now that he's tenured, Bravman has cut back to 65 hours a week. "This is a great career," he says, "but it comes at a cost."

- *Put in the hours.* "There's no substitute for good preparation," says Bravman, who spent 8-11 hours on each lecture his first year as a teacher. Now Bravman has an entire library of handouts and viewgraphs. His computer-generated graphics alone clock in at more than 1,000 Mac hours. "And you can bet it's all backed up on discs stored in three different locations," he quipped.

TEACH EFFECTIVELY

- *Make time in the classroom count.* "It's not enough to have good class notes," says Jeremy Cohen of Communication. "You need to have clear goals, to know what you really want students to leave your class with."

- *Remember less can be more.* "Whenever I've gotten in trouble as a teacher, it's because I've presented too much material too fast," says John Bravman. "Now I try for less material presented so that students really learn."

- *Research how to teach.* "There's a whole literature out there about how students learn," says Cohen. "Lecturing may feel good, but studies tells us students remember less than 20 percent of what you've taught just two weeks after the class is over. With the help of the Center for Teaching and Learning, I'm just starting to find out how people really learn, how students really process information. If I'd wasted as much time in my scholarship as I have in ineffective teaching, I would never have gotten tenure." (Look for Cohen's discussion of learning styles in freshmen and seniors—and what to do about the differences—in an upcoming issue of CTL's *TA Talk*.)

- *Improve skills gradually.* John Bravman has won a teaching award every year for the last five years. But he's still working on his teaching style. He picks one specific skill and concentrates on it until he's satisfied with his improvement. Right now, Bravman is trying to use blackboards in a systematic, left to right manner, so note-taking is easier for students.

CHOOSE IMPORTANT RESEARCH

- *Focus on cutting-edge scholarship.* "Tenure committees aren't counting the number of pieces you

do anymore," says Jeremy Cohen. "Now you need to be the expert in one specific area. Don't waste time trying to prove you're a generalist. Early on, I asked a senior colleague to help me figure out what was really important in my field," says Cohen. "When I came up for tenure, the pieces that mattered were my pride and joy pieces, the articles that charted new territory."

• *Drop the fluff.* "You can't do the extra book review because it's nice to see your name in print," warns Cohen. "You can't do things that are fun, but a little bit outside your field. There just isn't time."

• *Disappear.* Karen Sawislak suggests leaving your office or lab when you need to concentrate. "If you're present, the demands will find you," she says.

RECOGNIZE YOUR LIMITS

• *Forget perfection.* "Most of us arrive at Stanford as perfectionists, but that's a recipe for disaster," says Jeremy Cohen. "A few years ago, a friend told me I had too much on my plate, that I wasn't going to survive trying to be a perfect teacher, scholar, father, and husband. Boy, was she right!"

Karen Sawislak agrees. "Even trying for the perfect lecture every time is nuts," she says. "Always remember it's a long haul."

• *Limit office hours.* "I teach my TAs that it is not their job to be students' best friends," says Cohen. "I ask my students to respect me the way they'd respect any other professional. I say, 'Come see me during office hours; make an appointment like you would with a doctor.' I tell students my home life is mine. But I also make it clear they won't suffer if they wait until I'm in the office to call about a problem. I also keep the message machine on when I'm at my computer so student calls don't interrupt research."

• *Keep family and social life sacred.* "I made a conscious decision to put my family first," says Jeremy Cohen. "Many faculty write off family while trying for tenure. But if you ignore your kids now, they'll get hurt—and you can't make it up to them later. You have to ask yourself, 'What's important in the long run?'"

STILL OVERWHELMED? JUST ZEN OUT

• *When all else fails, try irrationality.* Half-jokingly, Karen Sawislak suggested all of us might learn something from Zen masters' approach to achieving balance. "Denying that you can achieve a balance is perhaps the only way to find balance," she concluded with a knowing smile.

Welcome *(continued)*

years in the Paracollege have served me well. As a teacher, I aim to make autodidacts of my students and hope they begin to understand how the university's resources can assist them in articulating and examining the questions that interest them most.

At Stanford, TAs are often the crucial link between undergraduates and the resources they need to learn how to explore their own questions. TAs are themselves in need of resources that will help them guide undergraduates, and that brings me to the services we provide at CTL.

First, CTL's consultants and I are here to meet with you if you would like to discuss teaching-related concerns. If you are having teaching problems involving students, colleagues, or other teachers—or if you simply want to talk about some creative new ideas—just give us a call.

Secondly, we offer several ways to help you evaluate and improve your teaching. You may, for example, request to have one of your regular class sessions videotaped. Once on tape, you may meet with one of our consultants to review the session and reflect on what you are doing. This may seem intimidating at first, but those who have been taped say the experience yields very positive results. Videotaping is also available, without charge, to those wanting to practice a job talk or a seminar presentation.

Our consultants are also available for small group evaluations. At a date of your choosing, the consultant comes to the class for the last twenty minutes and, after you have left, divides your students into small groups. Each group discusses what they like about the course and what needs improvement, and also offers specific suggestions for change. The consultant confers with these groups and then reports the results to you in a private consultation. This diagnostic service is especially useful in the middle of a term when you can still incorporate students' suggestions into the remaining weeks of your course.

Written student evaluation questionnaires are also available at CTL. You may wish to use these in the middle of the term to assess how things are going, or you may use them at the end of the quarter to build up a record of teaching evaluations for your job file. Consultants are also available to help you interpret these student evaluations.

Finally, I urge you to visit our offices on the ground floor of Sweet Hall. We have a book and videotape library you may consult to stimulate your own pedagogical thinking. If you would like more information please contact our administrator, Marta Espinoza, at 723-2207, or contact me at 723-6487. I can also be reached via E-mail at ea.mwg@FORSYTHE.

CTL CONSULTANTS

CTL consultants are graduate students with successful TA experience and special training in discussing teaching and learning problems. You'll meet one of them, or a member of our staff, when you request a videotape session or a quick, in-class evaluation.

Derede Arthur (English)	Robert Kunath (History)
Roland Bürgmann (Geology)	Matthew Lombard (Communication)
David Coe (History)	David Lowell (Engineering-Economic Systems)
Diana Cordova (Psychology)	Kelly Mays (English)
Sanford Dickert (Electrical Engineering)	Lance Miller (Drama)
Mark Greaves (Philosophy)	Linda Price (Industrial Engineering)
Greg Greenway (Political Science)	Jackie Scott (Philosophy)
Rafael Guzman (Petroleum Engineering)	Susan Shadle (Chemistry)
Chris Kilby (Economics)	Anne Steinemann (Civil Engineering)
Tracy King (Linguistics)	Donna Storey (Asian Languages)
Paul Kjellberg (Philosophy)	Ben Tigner (Physics)
	Mark Yeager (Chemistry)

CTL LIAISONS

CTL liaisons are TAs nominated by their departments to help acquaint other TAs with CTL's services and other teaching resources on campus. Contact your department liaison if you want to know how it feels to be videotaped—or if you have a teaching problem that is related to your department's subject matter or class format.

Humanities and Sciences

Asian Languages	Donna Storey
Biological Sciences	Hanya Chrispeels
Chemistry	Mark Yeager
Classics	David Briney
Drama	Lance Miller
Economics	Chris Kilby
English	Tim Wandling
German Studies	Ellen Anderson
History	Katherine Jolluck
Linguistics	Tracy King
Mathematics	David Ho
Music	Charles Cronin
Philosophy	Mark Greaves
Physics	Ben Tigner
Political Science	Greg Greenway
Psychology	Sonja Lyubomirsky
Sociology	David Miyahara
Spanish & Portuguese	Yasushi Ishii

Engineering

Civil Engineering	Surya Kumar Gunturi
Electrical Engineering	Sanford Dickert
Engineering-Economic Systems	David Lowell
Industrial Engineering & Engineering Management	Tom Grossman
Materials Science	Bill Bowen

Earth Sciences

Geology	Roland Bürgmann
Geophysics	Dale Richards
Petroleum Engineering	Rafael Guzman

