

Samuel Craig

Sponsor:

Course: Math 250A

In my first semester as a UTA, I aided a professor teaching an upper division class in which the majority of the students were math majors. For the Fall '10 and Spring '11 semesters, I had the opportunity to assist Dr. Jones with a lower division course in which math majors were the vast minority. Namely, Math 250A and 250B, which is Calculus and Differential Equations I and II. This presented me with new challenges in how to engage and encourage the students while conveying course topics in a manner they could appreciate. The first half of the course had a lab component that focused on introducing the students to Matlab and its use concerning various topics from the course material. The latter half had no lab component, so to fill my budgeted working hours Professor Jones recommended that I conduct a weekly recitation section. Recitations throughout the semester have consisted of a mixed variety of me lecturing concerning concepts that students were unclear on, answering in-depth questions, and either I or the students solving example problems that I posed. When working problems in recitations, I focused on helping the students to not simply regurgitate methods by which we solved problems in the course, but rather to really understand why we employed certain tools, the circumstances under which we were able to, and the theoretical underpinnings of our tools. I gained great satisfaction in helping the students to mature mathematically. Also during both semesters, I held three weekly office hours, and graded problem sets. I have absolutely enjoyed being a UTA. I was tasked with responsibilities that were stimulating and challenging, and in a manageable amount so that they did not interfere with my own studies. Refreshing my own understanding of the course material was certainly a benefit to participating in the program. But more so, I enjoyed the interaction with the students and fellow math majors, the opportunity to inspire mathematical thought and excitement about the subject, and being able to learn from the advice given and experiences shared with each professor I've assisted.