



# Teaching Concerns

Newsletter of the Teaching Resource Center for Faculty and Teaching Assistants

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## Using a T.A.P.: What's It Like?

by Sara I. James, TA, Department of French

Since starting teaching in the French Department last year, I have twice used the T.A.P. as mid-term course evaluations. As such, I have found them to be invaluable, as have my students--once they get over their initial surprise at the format. The T.A.P. provides in-depth student evaluations, through the ease of the process (no lengthy written forms to fill out) and the anonymity that makes many students feel more inclined to express themselves.

For my part, I have always received incredibly well-thought-out comments accompanied by clear practical directives from the class as a whole (the process ensures that only majority comments will be included in the final report). I always make a point of following up the T.A.P. with a class discussion, letting students know that I have considered their comments, although not all suggested changes can be implemented ("yes, the consultant informed me that as a class you would prefer never to have chapter tests, but I'm afraid you're just going to have to live with it. Now, you said drills are useful, so let's discuss which kinds we should use more often. Here are options I've come up with . . .").

I've found that as a result of T.A.P.s, the class as a whole is more involved in learning and more responsive; they are much more willing to speak out voluntarily, and are aware and appreciative of the fact that their opinions have been solicited and, quite often, play a part in the format of the course. It is no longer a class they simply take--it is a class that they have the opportunity and responsibility to make their own.