

Teaching Manual

Institute for Women's Studies

University of Georgia

While there is a great deal of academic freedom within the classroom, there are also university and departmental policies to which all instructors must adhere. The following represents guidelines that every TA in women's studies should know and follow.

1. **Preparing for the job:** It is your responsibility to make sure to attend the university-wide orientation for new graduate assistants if this is your first time teaching at the university. Please see Blaise if you need information about this orientation. You should also have taken GRSC 7770.
<http://www.uga.edu/provost/polproc/aapm/faculty/ga/11201.html>
2. **Email Policy:** All faculty, all students, and all staff who have access to email as a regular part of their duties must register a preferred e-mail address for official University communications. This address is the location to which the University will send official e-mail communications. At their discretion, faculty, staff, and students may or may not elect to publish their registered e-mail address in the UGA phonebook (in both electronic and printed versions). Recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical, it is recommended that these e-mail addresses be checked daily, but at a minimum twice-per-week.
<http://www.emailinfo.uga.edu/holbrookmemo.txt>
3. **Syllabus:** There is certain information that must be contained on every course syllabus. The syllabus is to be treated like a contract between you and your students, and you should do your best to follow your own throughout the semester. To fail to do so would be unfair to everyone involved.

Be sure to check the registrar's schedule for key dates so that you do not schedule class on a vacation day and so that you are aware of the midpoint deadlines. This is also where you will find your final exam time. Key dates can generally be found on the registrar's web page:

<http://www.reg.uga.edu/or.nsf/html/keydates>

You may also want to make yourself aware of religious observance days (which are often not official days off at the university) so that you don't schedule exams or due dates on these days. Many Jewish students, for example, go home for Rosh Hashanah.

You can see the required information for your syllabus here:

<http://curriculumsystems.uga.edu/Policies/CourseSyllabusPolicy.pdf>

Your syllabus is a class syllabus, but it should include information from the master syllabus as well. Blaise will be preparing master syllabi for 1110 and 2010 (using the course descriptions as they were approved by the University Curriculum Committee)—please see her for that file.

With regard to changing the syllabus in the middle of the semester, there are no official policies for doing so. One way to avoid having to change the syllabus is to make the course outline very general so that many different options could fit within it, and then to give students more specific information as the semester progresses. However, we would prefer it if you have a relatively

structured syllabus, especially for the intro-level courses, so please make sure not to be *too* unstructured.

Another way to deal with this issue might be to schedule in a syllabus revision at the midpoint. You could choose a date to do midterm evaluations and then note that syllabus changes may occur based on midterm feedback. That way, students will have been given advanced warning about such changes.

Some instructors have found it helpful to include a statement on their syllabi such as, “This course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.”

In our administrative experience, students react most negatively to **ADDING** assignments or readings, or to moving exams, papers, and deadlines to a point **EARLIER** in the semester. They are rarely upset by reducing work or moving things to later in the semester. I have also had success with changing my syllabus through student consensus—that way, they get a chance to make their concerns known.

Here are the official descriptions (as found in the UGA bulletin) for WMST1110 and WMST2010:

WMST 1110. Multicultural Perspectives on Women in the United States. 3 hours.

Experiences of women in selected racial and ethnic communities: Latinas/Chicanas, African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and other women in contemporary United States.

WMST 2010. Introduction to Women's Studies. 3 hours.

The study of women of diverse racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds. Topics include contemporary concerns within women's studies: labor markets, health, reproduction, socialization, language, media representations, law, and public policy.

It is important that women’s studies work on to making these courses distinct from one another. A primary way to do this is to use WMST 1110 to explore the specific incidents and cultural forces that have shaped the lives of women of color in the US, such as slavery (for Black women). This may mean that a groups-based approach (e.g., a unit on Black women, a unit on Chicana women, etc.) may be more appropriate than an issues-based approach (e.g., women and work, women and sexuality, etc.). Another way to do this is to give WMST 2010 a more global focus, while retaining a more national focus for WMST 1110. These are not mandates, but suggestions. We as women’s studies administrators and instructors will keep revisiting this issue over time. One problem that we have already identified is the dearth of textbooks that take a groups based approach. Of course, there are other issues as well that arise from this, such as concerns about tokenism, knowledge of various ethnic histories, etc. Just know that, for the time being, the curriculum committee is looking into this issue and trying to resolve it.

If you are teaching a course other than these introductory courses, your syllabus will differ somewhat. We can discuss this on an individual basis.

4. **Textbooks:** Cicely Robinson will be happy to order your class textbooks through the bookstore, or you can call the bookstore and order them yourself. You should try to do that as early as possible so that your students are not without a textbook on the first day of classes. You can also

order exam and desk copies of textbooks from various publishers, although policies differ as to whether these books are free or not, etc.

5. **Attendance and class cancellation:** You should not cancel classes, nor change the hours that your class meets. If you must miss class, please attempt to find a substitute. The office will help you in this.

Canceling classes:

<http://www.uga.edu/provost/polproc/aapm/gap/general/40104.html>

Attendance policies are at your discretion, although they should be described fully on your syllabus. If you decide to give students excused absences, it is up to you to decide what is a reasonable excuse. Here are the University of Georgia's policies regarding attendance:

Attendance policies:

<http://www.uga.edu/provost/polproc/aapm/gap/ca/40302.html>

Attendance for religious holidays:

<http://www.uga.edu/provost/polproc/aapm/gap/ca/40301.html>

Attendance with medical excuses:

<http://www.uga.edu/provost/polproc/aapm/gap/ca/40304.html>

If you wish to have an absence verified (e.g., a call placed to a doctor, etc.) you can do so through the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs:

<http://www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/>

6. **Dropping and late adding students:** Students may be administratively dropped for non-payment. If this happens, the instructor has no part in the process, but he or she will be notified about it. The instructor will also be told when the student is able to return to class.

<http://www.uga.edu/provost/polproc/aapm/gap/general/40113.html>

<http://www.uga.edu/provost/polproc/aapm/gap/general/40107.html>

Drops occur only before the end of add/drop. After that, withdrawals are required and the student's grade will show up as W (or, after midterm, WF) on his or her transcripts. You may have a student ask about "deleting" a course, or removing it from his or her record completely. It is theoretically possible to do but please never recommend it as an option. The registrar's office strongly discourages it and will only do so in the case of a university error.

It is your decision whether to assign a student a W or WF before the midterm—if you feel the student withdrew because he or she was failing, a WF might be in order. However, my general sense is that most instructors just assign a W in those situations.

The grading system is fully described here:

<http://bulletin.uga.edu/bulletin/acad/Grades.html>

Instructors may withdraw students for excessive absences, but this term ("excessive absence") should be defined on the syllabus.

<http://www.uga.edu/provost/polproc/aapm/gap/general/40117.html>

If you have a student who needs to drop class after the midterm but you do not feel that he or she deserves a WF, you have a few options to exercise. You can give the student an I (incomplete)

and allow him or her to make up the work at a later date (if the work is not completed within 3 semesters, it automatically becomes an F).

You can also assign the student a WF but then do a grade change to a W after the course is over. (I know, it seems like it would be cheating, but I just returned from an advising meeting in which I was assured this was perfectly allowable! Use your judgment here, though, as the midpoint withdrawal date does exist for a reason. Students generally don't know about this option and we should therefore not publicize it.) One grade change that is strongly discouraged is from I to W. The Board of Regents (BOR) frowns on this and will occasionally do an audit to find out why it happened.

The last and probably best solution in this situation is to refer the student to the Office for the Vice President for Student Affairs. They will help the student document hardship and may allow the student to drop with a W even after the midterm deadline.

<http://www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/withdrawals.html>

Students should also not be allowed to add courses after the first 14 calendar dates of the term.

<http://www.uga.edu/provost//polproc/aapm/gap/general/40116.html>

7. Other administrative policies:

- a. **Giving a grade before midterm:** As best I can tell, it is not required that you give students any major grade before the midterm withdrawal date. However, I encourage you to do so, as it is fair that the student should receive feedback on how he or she is doing in the course while he or she can still withdraw. Therefore, try to schedule some sort of midterm grade (be it an exam, homework, etc.) that will be returned to the student before the midterm withdrawal date has passed. The BOR recommendations are listed here:

<http://www.usg.edu/academics/handbook/section2/2.07.phtml#01>

- b. **Final exams:** Final exams should be given during the scheduled final period. Students and faculty may not “vote” to change their final exam period. Students must be provided with the opportunity to take a final exam in one form or another (this may include a portfolio, presentation, etc).

<http://www.uga.edu/provost//polproc/aapm/gap/general/40105.html>

In addition, no other exams (final or other) should be scheduled for the class the last three days of class before finals week. This includes take-home exams or major projects/presentations, unless they are to replace the scheduled final exam.

<http://www.uga.edu/provost//polproc/aapm/cm/general/30108.html>

- c. **Retaining grade information:** You should keep all papers and tests that are “uncontested” (meaning you have a reasonable belief that the student will not contest the grade) for one semester past the class's end. Please keep spring papers until the end of fall since many students leave during the summer. And, personally, I would prefer you err on the side of keeping things even longer than that, especially if you can save information (e.g., an excel file) in an electronic form on your computer. You must keep any contested papers and tests until the grade has been determined.

<http://www.uga.edu/provost//polproc/aapm/gap/general/40106.html>

- d. **Disabled students:** Appropriate accommodations should be made for disabled or learning disabled students. Learning disabled students should be able to provide

documentation for their LD and the Disability Resource Center will advise you as to what accommodations are appropriate (e.g., quiet testing room, time-and-a-half for tests, etc.).
<http://www.drc.uga.edu/>

- e. **Academic honesty:** Your syllabus must have a statement on it about academic honesty. If you suspect a student of academic dishonesty, you must follow the appropriate procedures. Remember, reporting a student does not mean that you are giving the final word on the matter—students are allowed due process. But if you do NOT report a student and simply decide on a penalty yourself, you are making yourself into the judge and jury (and placing yourself in a vulnerable position). Although it can be difficult, it is better for everyone involved if you go through the proper channels. And you may assure nervous students that simply meeting with you and a mediator about an academic honesty issue does NOT mean it will go on their records.
http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_honesty/academic_honesty.htm

The OVPI web page includes suggestions for instructors about how to create a “culture of honesty” in the classroom. One of the most important ways is to explain to students what constitutes academic dishonesty, including how plagiarism is defined, etc. It can be found here, along with the steps to take if you think you have a student who is being academically dishonest:
http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_honesty/hon_prom.htm

- f. **Dealing with disruptive or threatening students:** There are no clear-cut policies on this tricky issue, and therefore it should be handled on a case-by-case basis. Please discuss any such incidents with women’s studies administration right away. We will do everything in our power to help with the situation. The Office of Instructional Support and Development also has a number of suggestions on its website for dealing with difficult issues, including disruptive students, etc.
http://www.isd.uga.edu/teaching_resources/index.htm

If you suspect that the student is dealing with some personal hardship and feel that you can do so safely, it may help to refer the student to the university counseling center or to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. They can help with a great number of situations.
<http://www.uga.edu/stuact/handbook/stuaffairs/counseling.html>
<http://www.uga.edu/studentaffairs/>

It is also helpful, in cases like this, to familiarize yourself with the Student Code of Conduct. This document outlines the rules that students must follow in your classroom. If you are aware of the student’s responsibilities to you, you will be able to remind him or her of that fact.
<http://www.uga.edu/deanofstudents/judicial/downloads/conduct0203.pdf>

You may also wish to review the University of Georgia’s Non-discrimination and Anti-harassment policy:
<http://www.uga.edu/legal/NDAH.htm>

The sexual harassment policy is outlined here as well:
<http://www.uga.edu/provost/polproc/aapm/faculty/general/11106.html>

The procedure for dispute resolution is also found online. This is the procedure to follow in situations where you feel you (or another) is being sexually harassed or harmed in ways that violate UGA and BOR policies. You can find it here:
<http://www.uga.edu/legal/drp.htm>

8. **Grade Inflation:** The administration and faculty of the Institute for Women's Studies are concerned about trends of grade inflation, and we will ask that you take specific measures to avoid this problem. It is not acceptable to have 80%-90% A grades in a class of 40-45 students. Please familiarize yourself with the meanings of the various grade categories, below, and work to find appropriate ways of evaluating students' classroom performance. Suggestions for dealing with grade inflation include in-class exams, reading quizzes, and the use of rubrics for written assignments such as papers and journals. If you have any concerns about your ability to assign grades in a consistent, fair, and challenging way, please speak with the administration or your faculty mentor.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Quality of Work</u>
A	(90-100%)	Excellent
B	(80-89%)	Good
C	(70-79%)	Satisfactory
D	(60-69%)	Passing
F	(0-59%)	Failure

9. **Recruiting New Students/Supporting Women's Studies:** As intro teachers, you are some of our greatest resources for bringing in new majors, minors, and certificate candidates. Please, encourage students to think about adding a women's studies major or minor, and refer them to me if they have questions. Also, please promote events on campus that are organized/sponsored by women's studies or that deal with gender, sexuality, and other forms of diversity.
10. **WMST 1000:** Any student enrolled in a women's studies class may take WMST 1000 for a single elective hour. They must enroll in this course at the beginning of the semester, so be sure to mention it then. You will receive further information about it before you are to begin teaching. Information about this course from previous semesters can be found on the syllabus section of our website:
http://www.uga.edu/wsp/academics/syllabi_archive.php
11. **Service Learning:** If you are interested in incorporating service-learning projects into your classroom, you will find resources for doing so at the Office of Service Learning.
<http://www.uga.edu/servicelearning/>
12. **Academic Freedom:** Because women's studies encourages students to think critically and to develop their own views in an intellectually sound way, it is important that students not feel coerced into holding particular positions. You as the instructor of your class have academic freedom within the classroom, and you should therefore remember to use it responsibly. UGA supports academic freedom (see policy statement at: <http://www.uga.edu/legal/NDAH.htm>), which includes the sort of readings you assign, the sort of films you show, your lectures, and your discussions. However, be aware that there have been some movements by conservative students, organizations, and legislators to claim that "liberal" professors are biased in the classroom. One of the larger organizations doing this sort of work is FIRE: The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (<http://www.thefire.org/>). Some such organizations train students to monitor their professors for examples of bias and discrimination. Because the Institute for Women's Studies is already perceived as a "liberal" department, we may be especially at risk for this sort of targeting. At this time, I make no formal recommendations about this particular issue. However, I wanted

you to be aware of the presence of such students and organizations so that you can decide how to best handle it.

- 13. Teaching Awards:** Teaching assistants can apply for the awards through the Institute for Women's Studies. The two awards are the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award and the Excellence in Teaching Award. Both awards require that you have taught for several semesters at UGA, and the second award requires you to have already received the first award. (The second award is much more competitive—it is only given to 5 students a year and it comes with a \$1000 award.) Please see Blaise for more information.

Descriptions and applications for the TA awards are at the following website:

http://www.isd.uga.edu/teaching_assistant/ta-awards.html

You may also apply through OISD to be a TA mentor:

http://www.isd.uga.edu/teaching_assistant/tamentors/index.html

Finally, you may apply to graduate with a Graduate School Teaching Portfolio Certificate. (I'm not finding the appropriate web page for this right now, but please discuss it with me if you are interested and we will figure it out.) Teaching portfolios are described in detail here:

http://www.isd.uga.edu/teaching_assistant/ta-portfolio.html

- 14. Resources for Instructors:** There are several resources available for you as women's studies instructors. This includes our own video and book collection, the UGA library video and book collection, and the OISD media catalog (<http://media2.isd.uga.edu/>). You also have use of the women's studies teaching group WebCT site, as well as the multicultural teaching resources site that we are in the process of creating. You may use the back office in the building to hold office hours and you may use the computer and printer there as well.

You may also use our Xerox machine for classroom handouts, etc. Our office staff (Cicely Robinson and the student workers) can occasionally do copying for you, but please be conscious of their time and other responsibilities. If you would like to ask the student workers to do anything, please take it to Cicely so that she can assign those tasks according to their current work load.

Also, we ask that if you are going to create a course packet or other copies of articles, you either use the library's course reserves (http://www.libs.uga.edu/access_services/reserves.html) or have a Bel-Jean reading packet created (<http://www.bel-jean.com/>).

Any other questions you may have (e.g., about your professional relationships with your students, about how much time you are expected to work per week, etc.) may be answered in the TA Handbook (http://www.isd.uga.edu/teaching_assistant/ta-handbook.html), at the BOR's policy manual (<http://www.usg.edu/regents/policymanual/>), or at the Policies and Procedures section of the Academic Affairs Policy Manual (<http://www.uga.edu/provost/polpro.htm>). You may also contact me (blaiseparkerphd@gmail.com) at any time with questions you might have. In the meantime, I hope you all have a great semester!