SYLLABUS REFERENCE GUIDE

Below are excerpts from previous semesters’ RAP Gen Ed instructors’ syllabi that you may find helpful.

Great Beginning: View this syllabus as a guide to the course. It provides important information regarding the course, its assignments, grading, and available university resources. You should refer to it regularly. However, this document should be considered a working document. It is possible throughout the semester that a topic may take more time than expected, a reading may change, or a class may be cancelled due to a snow day or another emergency. If that is the case, the syllabus will be updated and a revised version will be posted on Moodle.

WHAT, WHEN, WHERE AND WHO:

What: Philosophy 160, Introduction to Ethics, (Gen Ed: AL)
When: Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:15
Where: Class Location: Orchard Hill, Grayson Hall - Room 109
Who: Instructor: Bob Gruber (call me “Bob”, please)
Contact: Email: rgruber@philos.umass.edu
Office: Bartlett 368
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:30 PM

It’s a nice touch to tell the students what you want to be called.

COMMUNICATION – EMAIL: It’s a good idea to give a response time window: How long before you respond to a student’s inquiry? Will you reply evenings? Weekends?

Be sure to emphasize that using the UMass email is the official university policy (look in the Academic Planner for Student Success) and on the UMass website.

• To make sure I receive and answer your email on time, please put “RESEC 162” in the subject line. If I need to contact you for any reason, I will use your UMass email address. Please make sure you check this mailbox regularly throughout the semester. If a message seeks a response, your reply is expected within 24 hours.

• I typically respond to emails within 24 hours during the week, but I do not typically respond to email after 5:00 PM or on weekends. I tend to get a high volume of email when a deadline is approaching. If you email me before 6:00 PM on the day before a quiz or deadline, you are guaranteed a reply. You are less likely to receive a reply if you email me after 6:00 PM.

• Contact me with questions you have but before you send me an email, please check the syllabus, Moodle, and other course materials for your answer.

CRITICAL COURSE INFORMATION: Short and succinct means students will read it. Goals and objectives give it meaning.

Examples:

• This course is an interdisciplinary approach to kinesiology, the science of human movement. Topics will include motor control, exercise physiology, biomechanics, sports medicine, exercise neuroscience, and exercise psychology. The objectives of this course include: providing you with a rounded introduction to the subfields of kinesiology; highlighting the importance of kinesiology and how it is being used in our everyday settings and introducing you to scientific articles and to encourage critical thinking about how science is portrayed to the public.
This course will focus, broadly, on what we might call “end of life” and “beginning of life” moral questions in health and medicine. We will discuss moral questions surrounding the following: physician assisted suicide, abortion, the use of preimplantation genetic diagnosis to select for and against traits for a future child, the creation of children who will serve as hematopoietic stem cell donors to help cure current children, and sex selection. Depending on the class’s expressed interests, we may also explore other related (whether closely or distantly) topics..... The aim of the course is to help students reason critically about these questions, to help students effectively evaluate, generate, and write about moral arguments, and to familiarize students with some of the larger contemporary debates in medical ethics.

The main goals of this course are (i) for students to become familiar with a few of the many questions discussed by philosophers today and (ii) for students to cultivate the skills necessary for philosophical inquiry, including critical reading, clear and articulate writing, and convincing and effective argumentation. Students will practice these skills throughout the duration of the course. By the end of the semester, students should be able to read and understand philosophical texts, explain the arguments given for different philosophical positions, critically examine these arguments, and construct arguments in defense of their own philosophical views.

General Education Objectives:

- As part of the University’s General Education program, this course includes skills that are designed to prepare students for a lifetime of learning by introducing them to subjects and perspectives that they might not otherwise encounter, in a way that links classroom experiences to the broader world.
- Throughout the semester, we will have tutorials about research and study skills. For example, I will provide a lesson on navigating the library website.
- As a designated HS (Historical Studies) General Education course, this class explores the historical developments that have shaped the world we live in today, while teaching students critical skills in reading, writing, and analysis. As a RAP class, this course also provides students with a unique opportunity to develop these reading, writing, and analytical skills within a supportive community.
- This class is part of the UMass General Education requirements; it satisfies the historical studies (HS) and global diversity (G) general education requirement and is meant to bring overall breadth and depth to learning at UMass. In Ancient Civilizations, human interactions within the process of state formation provide the student with an understanding of historical processes and global diversity.
- The course goals outlined here are meant to foster the following skills advocated by the Gen Ed program at UMass: inquiry and analysis, problem solving, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, and (of course!) ethical deliberation. These skills are ones that are not specific to philosophy, but rather, will translate into any field of study and any line of work.
- This course fulfills the AL (literature) and G (global social and cultural diversity) designations of the General Education requirements. This means that, as we read and discuss our texts, we will be thinking about what literature is and why we read it (AL). We will also explore what “diversity” means. Understandably, some ways of life and some ways of thinking are – and will perhaps remain – unfamiliar to us. Can we find ways to relate to them, while also recognizing that our comprehension of them will never be perfect? (G)

Equivalent to Main Campus Section:

- Your expected workload will reflect the fact that this is a four-credit course. As a general guideline, the university suggests that students spend an additional two to three hours outside of class time per credit hour. For our purposes then, the expected amount of work outside of classroom time is 8 to 12 hours per week.
- This course is equivalent in content, credit and work load to the course section taught (in large lecture format) on the main campus.
**Time Management and Equivalency to Main Campus**

As a general guideline, the university suggests that students spend an additional two to three hours outside of class time per credit hour. This is a four-credit course and the material is equivalent to the main campus version of this course. You should plan to spend 8 to 12 hours a week outside of class time on your reading and other assignments. Here is a breakdown of how you should manage your time, give or take:

- **Reading:** 2.5 – 4 hours
- **Prep assignments:** 1.5 – 3 hours
- **Preparing for class:** 1 hour
- **Preparing for Exams:** The weeks of, and leading up to, the mid-term and final exam will require additional time.
- **Total:** 8 to 12 hours per week. Though we all work at different paces, please consult me if you are spending much more than the recommended time on each activity.

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**RAP COMPONENT:** Explain how the rap goals will be incorporated into your course. Here are some suggestions of ways to incorporate them into your syllabus. The rap goals are numbered.

**General Info:**

- You have selected to enroll in this course which is a part of Residential Academic Program (RAP), a unique educational opportunity. As a RAP class, one of our main goals will be to create a learning community that allows for free and open conversation and thought. You will all be encouraged to share your thoughts, feelings, and ideas, but you also need to make sure you are a good listener and classmate.
- This course is a RAP course. RAP courses are intended to facilitate a smooth transition to college life. This means talking about some of the different campus resources that are available to you, cultivating skills that will help you in all of your college courses, and making connections between this course and other courses and life experiences. Throughout the semester we will periodically check in on these different themes.

1. **Support students in achieving a smooth transition to college life.**
   - Feel free to email me or visit me at office hours to talk about how your semester is going and any questions you have about your undergraduate program. Our classroom will be a safe place to ask about any concerns that arise. In addition to teaching (insert subject), our classroom activities are intended to foster a smooth transition to college for each of you.
   - I will provide a forum for you to discuss your first semester/year here at UMass. Periodically we will check in with each other about how both our course and your semester are going.

2. **Ensure first-year students are aware of the multitude of resources and opportunities available at UMass.**
   - I will introduce you to resources like the Writing Center or the Learning Resource Center, along with the other resources included in your RAP Student Resource Guide.
   - You will look up articles on the UMass library databases and request books from the UMass library and Five College interlibrary loan system. I will also make announcements about talks and other events that are happening on campus.

3. **Develop an awareness and appreciation for the specific skills (inquiry and analysis, problem solving, critical and creative thinking, etc.) that are found in all Gen Ed courses.**
   - This course focuses on developing critical thinking and writing skills, alongside an emphasis on public speaking and collaborative work. Improving these skills provides a strong foundation for future scholastic and professional endeavors.
   - I will elaborate on when and how our curriculum incorporates Gen Ed Skills and will invite you to reflect on them.
4. Promote the practice of thinking about, talking about, and making connections between classes and life experiences in order to deepen engagement, understanding and increase the value of a college education.
   - You will notice that several of the course readings require you to peruse websites, gather information and pick your own articles to read. This will enable you to learn where to go to gather information for research. Our class discussions will talk about the connections between politics, economics, natural sciences and other fields of study.
   - I will encourage you to create connections between your life experiences and your understanding of the world outside of our classroom and to include these reflections in your work for our course. Since any class will be more interesting and more useful if you can relate the material to your own life and experiences, I will expressly encourage you to do so over the course of the semester, both in class as well as in the written assignments.

5. Provide first-year students with structured guidance in the development of various skills necessary to be successful in their college experience and be prepared to be engaged members of a global community upon graduation.
   - I will incorporate material from your RAP Student Resource Guide and tie it to my own lived experiences to help build a foundation for how and why the skills you are learning here at UMass will relate to both the rest of your college experience and to your life after college.
   - The skills I am talking about here are the nuts and bolts that make (academic) life work: things like timeliness, planning, email etiquette, etc. I will address these and other skills mentioned in the RAP Student Resource Guide throughout the semester.
   - This class is designed to encourage you to think critically about claims and arguments laid out by others. Being able to identify the assumptions people make in arguments, and summarize their general claims, analyze them, and evaluate them on the basis of evidence is a crucial skill that will help you succeed in college and beyond.

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**CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT:** Mutual respect fosters success, so spell it out.

- **Directly from** the Dean of Students: Campus Policies: “The University of Massachusetts Amherst strives to create an environment of academic freedom that fosters the personal and intellectual development of all community members. In order to do this, the University protects the rights of all students, faculty and staff to explore new ideas and to express their views. A necessary condition for these pursuits is an acceptance of the spirit of inquiry and a respect for diverse ideas and viewpoints. For true academic freedom to exist, this acceptance and respect must exist in both the overall campus environment and in the classroom.”
- “While the principle of academic freedom protects the expression and exploration of new ideas, it does not protect conduct that is unlawful and disruptive. The University preserves a high standard for members of the community in terms of mutual respect and civility. While each member of the community holds a number of rights, privileges and responsibilities, those individuals who disrespect the rights of others or who act in a ways that discredit themselves or the University may forfeit privileges or receive sanctions. As members of an academic community, we are obligated to be exemplary, both in our behaviors and in our attitudes. This obligation is especially important within the classroom context since this is one of the primary ways that learning and growth are fostered.”
- We are all responsible for creating a respectful classroom environment.
- Be kind and respectful to your classmates and your instructor!
- Please arrive on time and do not pack up to leave before the class ends.
- Do not use any electronic devices during class time (unless to take class notes or if the whole classroom is planning to work on something that needs the use of laptops).
- If you need to use your phone because something important came up (family matter, job interview, etc.) please let me know before the start of class. I will make an exception without hesitation.
- Make sure your behavior is neither distracting nor offensive.
• Using your cell phone in class is **never** appropriate. Texting, Tweeting, Snapchatting, Instagramming and Yakking during class while you cleverly hide your phone in your lap is a huge distraction—not to mention extremely impolite—to your instructor as well as to your classmates. Please put your phone in “Do Not Disturb” mode, or put it in your bag.

• Classroom Etiquette: You are expected to be respectful in class. You should not interrupt when someone else is speaking, and you should not direct offensive comments at anyone or disregard their opinions. I allow the use of laptop computers for taking notes and accessing readings during class. You should not use your computer for any other reason! Please refrain from using cell phones for any reason during class at all times. Cell phone use is distracting both to me as well as to the other students around you.

• Classroom Technology Policy: Laptops, tablets, phones, and cameras must be silenced and put away during class unless otherwise indicated (such as use for research during group activities, or completing the mid-semester survey). Studies show that handwritten notetaking improves the synthesis of knowledge.

• Classroom Community Expectations: Throughout this course, we will address a range of topics that can be controversial and perhaps even difficult to discuss. For this reason, be sure that you approach both our course materials and our class discussions with an open mind. Always express your agreements, disagreements, and debates with classmates in a civil manner. Similarly, be willing to hear out your peers when they are the ones who disagree with you. There is a zero tolerance policy for harmful behavior or speech in this class. For complete details, see UMass’s Guidelines for Classroom Civility and Conduct: http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/campuspolicies/classroom

**ATTENDANCE- BOTH CLASSROOM AND EXAMS:** Although you need a policy on your syllabus, it’s wise to leave room for flexibility for the unexpected.

**Examples:**

• You are expected to attend class. I do not give credit for attending class, because I believe that you are responsible for your own learning. You should know, however, that how well you do in the class will still depend on your level of attendance and preparation. To become skilled in philosophy, you have to practice. And one of the important ways that we will practice philosophy is by doing it together in class.

• The instructor will make reasonable accommodations for excused absences, but **students are responsible** for all material covered, assignments distributed or collected, and announcements made during any classes missed.

• Class attendance is NOT mandatory. However, it is strongly suggested to attend every class if you want to receive a good grade. Why? First, most of the exam questions will be similar to the problem sets which will be discussed only in class. That is to say, the only way to learn the solutions of the problem sets is to attend classes. The solutions will **not** be uploaded to the course website. Second, I usually give hints about the possible exam questions during classes. When discussing a particular concept in class, for instance, you may hear something like “this can be a good question to ask in the exam”.

• Examples of excused absences: *Documented* illness or university-sponsored activity.

• Examples of unexcused absences: Oversleeping, leaving town early for a holiday weekend.

• If you know that you are going to be absent for a quiz, you **must notify me the day before the quiz** so that we can arrange an alternative time for you to take it.

• If you’re confused about what a legitimate academic excuse is, ask me or check out the UMass Academic Regulations.

• You may be marked absent from class if you conduct business unrelated to class (including but not limited to: reading the newspaper, texting, browsing Facebook, etc.)

• Class attendance is mandatory. This class depends heavily on your active and enthusiastic participation in class discussion. Your contributions, thoughts, ideas, questions, and interactions with your classmates are crucial. Please read the material, absorb the material, evaluate the material, and come prepared to give your opinions. Barring extreme unforeseen circumstances, more than three absences will result in the reduction of your final grade by one percentage point for each absence.
PARTICIPATION: Define what you mean by participation in your class. It’s different for everyone!

Examples of what participation in your class means:
- Announced and unannounced in-class exercises, such as reflective writing and small group projects on assigned readings, will contribute to your class participation grade.
- Participation means coming to class having already read the day’s reading, and with at least one specific question about the reading.
- I will sometimes call on students at random.
- Here are some examples of things you can do that will positively affect your participation grade:
  - Coming to class on time; asking questions; engaging in class discussion
- Here are some examples of things you can do that will negatively affect your participation grade:
  - Habitually showing up late; missing class without a legitimate academic excuse, “checking out” of class discussion; being disrespectful to others in the class.

Examples of what participation in this class means:
- Announced and unannounced in-class exercises, such as reflective writing and small group projects on assigned readings, will contribute to your class participation grade.
- Participation means coming to class having already read the day’s reading, and with at least one specific question about the reading.
- If you are shy or worried about public speaking, participation can also mean attentive listening or writing down questions on note paper and handing it into the instructor at the end.

Qualifying statements about expectations for class discussions:
- Contributing thoughtful and productive comments and questions to class discussions
- Speaking and listening are skills that complement one another, and learning to do both effectively will help you in many aspects of your life in the future.
- This class depends heavily on your active and enthusiastic participation in class discussion. Your contributions, thoughts, ideas, questions, and interactions with your classmates are crucial. Please read the material, absorb the material, evaluate the material, and come prepared to give your opinions.
- Here are some questions to ask yourself in regard to your participation during discussions:
  - Was I adequately prepared to participate in the discussion?
  - Did I make contributions that added to everyone’s understanding of the subject?
  - Did I facilitate other people’s participation?
  - Did I take care not to dominate the discussion?
Each time that you are able to leave class answering “yes” to the above questions, you will know that you have excelled in class participation and likely contributed to a stimulating and productive group discussion.

How will you MEASURE class participation?
- Class Participation 25% (total): In class exercises/quizzes and short assignments 15%; Leading discussion section 10%.
- Students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process. This includes attentive listening and completing in-class activities (2 points for each class).
EXPLAINING ASSIGNMENTS:

Examples:
- **Writing quality** is as important here as it is in an English class. Please proofread, as points will be deducted for incomprehensible and grammatically incorrect sentences.
- **Group Project**: Each student will participate in a group project that will create a civilization based on the concepts we discuss in class and compare it to one of the civilizations in the book (not necessarily one we have covered in class). There will be **three people per group** and you will be required to write a **9-11 page paper** and prepare a **Power point presentation of 10-12 minutes** to be presented in the last two weeks of class.
- **Concept Mapping Papers**: FIVE 2-3 page papers that **will synthesize and critically evaluate** an idea or “problem” that is discussed in lecture and readings. **Your goal** is to briefly outline the idea or problem and discuss possible solutions as informed by our course and supplemented by your own knowledge and experience. **These exercises will help you** to synthesize and integrate ideas, think critically and holistically, and creatively engage with the course material. Through these exercises, you can improve your writing by structuring ideas and constructing arguments.
- The reading response should be 1½ pages, single spaced. Do not go over 1½ pages but do not feel obligated to write a full 1½ pages. One and ¼ pages is sufficient as long as you have met the requirements of the reading response.
- Consumer economic issue project: Working in **groups of 3**, you are required to select a consumer economics issue and to provide an **in-depth analysis** of both sides of this issue. A **written report** and short oral presentation are due at the end of the semester (last day of class, Thursday 12/10). This is a group project so **I will make sure** everybody who is part of the group contributes to the development of it. I will also upload guidelines to make sure we are in the same page with regard to the outline of the project. **The objectives** of this project are for you to learn how to summarize information and be concise when talking about an issue, learn how to search and properly cite sources, analyze a topic critically and find reasons to support your claims. You will have to make submissions throughout the semester so I can monitor your progress (please see schedule below).
- Assignment: Reading Response 1 due Friday, September 25 at 11:55PM

COURSE GRADING: It is important to assess students in more than one way, and early in the semester!

Examples:
- Final course grades will be calculated according to the following weights:
  - Class Participation and Attendance: 20%
  - Ten Reflection Papers: 50% (5% each)
  - Two Examinations: 30% (15% each)
- The point total for each assignment increases over the course of the semester so that you can be rewarded for improving your writing skills during the semester.
- **Course Assignments & Grading**
  - Attendance: 10%
  - First Paper: 15% Thursday, October 1
  - Mid-Term: 20% Tuesday, October 20
  - Website Assignment: 10% Tuesday, November 3
  - Book Review: 20% Tuesday, December 8
  - Final Exam: 25% Thursday, December 17 (1:00-3:00PM)
- **Team grades** – There are 4 team projects with entirely team-based grades. I reserve the right to adjust any individual’s grade to reflect that student’s relative contribution where significant discrepancies are evident from peer review or your team contribution memo.
OTHER: Information you may want to include.

- This syllabus is subject to revision and if revised I will make an announcement via email and in class. If at any point in the semester you think the syllabus is unclear please ask me.
- Moodle: Readings for the course and due dates for assignments will both be posted on Moodle. You will also be required to submit an electronic copy of each of the three papers on Moodle (in addition to a hard copy that you will turn in at the beginning of the class period on which the paper is due). If you have not already done so, please familiarize yourself with Moodle. Let me know if you have any difficulties.
- Grade Complaints: I am happy to talk to you about your graded assignments. If you are confused about why you received the grade that you did, the best thing to do is to first read over the comments that you received on the assignment, write down any questions that you may have about those comments, and then come meet with me during office hours or (if you cannot make my office hours) schedule an appointment. If you feel that a grade you have received is unfair and would like to petition for a higher grade, please write a paragraph explaining why you think that the grade is unfair. Either e-mail me the paragraph ahead of time or bring it with you when we meet.
- If you’re ever confused about an essay or argument we’re going over in class, or if you ever want to follow up (tangentially or directly) on a conversation we’re having in class, or, really, if you want to talk about anything philosophy related, you shouldn’t hesitate to drop by during my office hours! You also shouldn’t hesitate to ask to schedule an appointment with me outside of my designated office hours if you would like to meet but cannot on Tuesdays/Thursdays from 11:30 – 12:30. Similarly, you should feel free to email me with any questions, comments, and invitations for discussion (et cetera).
- Please plan ahead and read the course outline and syllabus. I will distribute course trackers so you can plan when assignments/tests occur. I suggest using the academic planner you received from your college during Fall NSO.
- Although this course is taught in your residence hall, and therefore encourages a more casual environment than other on-campus courses, you are still expected to dress appropriately.
- Things to keep in mind: Retain a copy of all assignments until the graded version is returned; keep hold of all graded assignments until after the final grades are posted. All papers must be submitted both in hard copy the day they are due and via Turnitin on the class Moodle page – only those papers submitted in both formats will be graded; All late papers will be subject to a third of a letter grade deduction for each day they are late.
- Extra Credit Opportunities: There will be at least one extra credit opportunity over the course of the semester – if others become available, I will make an announcement in class. For each of these opportunities, a 1-2 page paper discussing how the lecture/museum exhibit relates to topics covered in the course will be required for credit. Each extra credit opportunity will be worth three (3) points on the midterm. As of right now, extra credit can be received from visiting the Beneski Museum of Natural History at Amherst College.
- There is NO EXTRA CREDIT for this class so make sure you submit your work on time!
- Basic Expectations: Success in this course requires attentiveness, participation, and timely completion of assignments. Take advantage of weeks with lighter reading loads to read ahead and/or work on your group research project. I also strongly recommend that you take notes during lectures, discussions, and films, and that you print out and take notes on electronic readings. I will expect you to cite these in your papers and group research project.

Succeeding in this Class: Here are some recommendations for doing well in the course:

- Attend all classes.
- Be an active listener (take notes!) and participate as much as possible.
- Read the assignments before the class. Come to class having thought about the material and prepared to ask questions. The prep Assignments should help you with this.
Take good notes on materials. Pay special attention to important concepts, which may appear in bold in the readings, or are highlighted in lectures. You may want to create flash cards of key concepts and terms.

Get in the habit of reading one or more newspapers regularly. Pay special attention to coverage of politics in other countries and/or issues that connect to themes we cover in class. In the United States, The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal typically offer differing views on issues. Outside the United States, the BBC and The Guardian have extensive international political coverage. Additionally, several other news sources such as The Economist and the BBC feature extensive information about the politics and leaders in various countries and regions.

If you have questions about ideas in the readings or in the news, contact me via email or office hours, or ask me after class.

Start your assignments early. Don’t put things off to the last minute.

Keep a personal calendar. Write down all of the important dates for this course, and keep track of them over time. If there are scheduling conflicts, let me know ASAP.

Consider forming a small study group with other students in the class to go over readings and prepare for exams.

ACCOMMODATION POLICY STATEMENT: Every syllabus needs this!

- The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services or the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health, you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements. The contact information for Disability Services is 161 Whitmore Building 413-545-0892 Disability Services.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND WRITING: Every syllabus needs this!

Remind Students About This Throughout the Semester!

- The university's policies on plagiarism apply to all work in this course, including response papers, exams and projects. Copying/pasting from the internet, using a friend’s paper, or using a paper you’ve written for a previous course all count as plagiarism and will NOT be accepted. Such examples will receive a “0” for the assignment in question, and any further incidences will affect your grade in the course or may go on your University record. For further information, please visit the University’s webpage on academic honesty: Dean of Students: Academic Honesty

- Note: Copy/pasting from the internet is, in most cases, OBVIOUS, so cite your sources! (and please don’t use Wikipedia in academic papers...). Additional information regarding plagiarism is in your Academic Planner for Student Success.

- As for cheating, DON’T. If I catch you cheating, I will follow the procedures as per the University’s Academic Honesty Policy. Please read and familiarize yourself with it: Dean of Students: Academic Honesty