

## Syllabus Suggestions

**Table of Contents:** Below are excerpts from previous semesters' RAP Gen Ed instructors' syllabi that you may find helpful. Please use the following as a template/guide for your own syllabus.

1. Introduction & Syllabus Overview
2. Communication
3. Critical Course Information
4. RAP Component
5. Classroom Environment
6. Attendance & Participation
7. Assignments & Grading
8. Accommodation Statement
9. Academic Honesty
10. Miscellaneous

# Introduction & Syllabus Overview

## Great Beginning:

View this syllabus as a guide to the course. It provides important information regarding the course, its assignments, grading, and university resources. You should refer to it regularly. If you have questions about the course, the syllabus is the first place you should look. This syllabus, and especially the course calendar, is subject to revision. 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 the syllabus or calendar is revised, an announcement will be made in class and via email and a revised version will be posted on Moodle.

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## What, Where, When & Who:

**What:** Afro-American Studies 151, Literature and Culture, (Gen Ed: ALDU)

**When:** Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-12:45

**Where:** Class Location: Southwest, Melville Hall - Room 130

**Who:** Instructor: Olivia Ekeh

**Contact:** Email: [oekeh@umass.edu](mailto:oekeh@umass.edu)

Course website: <https://moodle.umass.edu> (Net ID required for login)

Office: New Africa House Basement, Room 024

Office Hours: Mondays 11:00 AM-1:00 PM or by appointment

## What is this document?

This syllabus provides an outline of the course. This includes:

1. what the class is about
2. how the class works
3. class expectations
4. how to succeed in class
5. schedule of course readings & assignments

**COMMUNICATION – EMAIL:** It is a good idea to give a response time window: How long before you respond to a student’s inquiry? Will you reply evenings? Weekends? What are your expectations regarding student responses to your emails?

Be sure to emphasize that **using the UMass email is the official university policy** (on the [UMass website](#)).

- To make sure I receive and answer your email on time, please put “RESEC 162” in the subject line.
- Begin with a salutation and use the recipient’s proper title (e.g. Dear Professor Whitworth). Write clearly in complete sentences, correct grammar, and do not use netspeak abbreviations (IDK, BTW, etc.). Use an appropriate closing (e.g. Best, Regards) and sign the email with your preferred name. This will be important when communicating with professors in other courses and for your future careers.
- 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. Also, please follow proper e-mail etiquette (see *Academic Planner for Student Success*).
- 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 **will receive** a reply. You are less likely to receive a reply if you email me after 6:00 PM. For e-mails that require a lengthy answer, I suggest that you make an appointment to see me in person instead.
- 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.
- While you are always welcome to email me with any questions, there are some things that are better discussed in person.
- **NEW!** If you would like to consult with me regarding a recommendation letter or the like, please let me know **at least three weeks ahead of deadline**.
- **NEW!** In addition to Moodle, you should be in the habit of checking your **UMASS email account** at least twice a day. This is the way the University communicates with you and you do not want to miss important information about your financial or academic standing, or opportunities to get involved

### AND

Your **SPIRE** account regularly to look for items on your “To Do” list. An unresolved item on your “To Do” list may hinder you from registering for classes

- Standard university policy for contact between students and instructors is **university email** (i.e. @umass.edu email addresses). Emails to me ([@umass.edu](#)) will be answered within **24 hours during “business hours”, Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm**. Evenings, weekends, and holidays are for focusing on our studies, relaxing, and enjoying our community. **Please feel free to email me during these times but please do not expect a reply until “business hours” resume**. In order to make the most of email exchanges, please follow this standard email template for communicating with me or any other instructor at UMASS:

**NEW!**

<b>Email</b>	Please communicate exclusively with your <b>UMASS email address</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<p>“Your Last Name” – ANTH150  <b>Example:</b> Mollard – ANTH150</p> <p>This gives me an easy way to search for your email, if necessary, and tells me right away that you are my student. I get a lot of emails and I don’t want you to get lost in the shuffle!</p>
<b>Greeting</b>	<p>“Dear &lt;&lt;Instructor’s Title&gt;&gt;”  <b>Example:</b> For me you may simply say “<b>Dear Priscilla</b>”.</p>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>Always use an appropriate, professional closing to any email, no matter how brief.  <b>Example:</b> “Regards, &lt;&lt;Your name&gt;&gt;”</p>

**APP SUGGESTION** – This is an app suggestion based on its use by a current RAP instructor

**Piazza**, from their website: “Anyone can ask and answer questions on Piazza. With students teaching students, conversations on Piazza can continue long after office hours are over. Piazza gives students anonymity options to encourage everyone—even shy students—to ask and answer questions. Instructor endorsements of good questions and answers let instructors push the class in the right direction.”

**Description of its use by instructor:**

“Piazza is a Q&A website. We will use Piazza for academic matters only. In Piazza, questions can be answered by other students or by the instructor, so I strongly encourage you to ask questions and answer some of them if you can. Here we will be able to ask questions regarding due dates, any difficulty you may have with homework, things that were not clear from class, etc. Piazza has the option of posting anonymously so you can ask anything without feeling self-conscious about the relevance of the question. When asking or answering questions, please be respectful and use appropriate language. Answering questions in Piazza will contribute to your participation grade (more on this later)

If you have a question regarding the course please check the Syllabus first, Moodle second and then the lecture slides third. If you do not find an answer in these places, please post your question in Piazza, either me or any of your classmates will answer your question there. Try not to send me emails with questions that may be on everybody interest.”

**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.
  - **NEW! Difficult content and topics:** As you’ll discover early on, the origins of many of our modern institutions have often been violent, brutal, and otherwise coercive. We will need to do our best to discuss these social processes in order to have an accurate understanding of what these social forces are, and how they have shaped our contemporary world. This includes topics such as war, dispossession, poverty, enslavement, racism, gender violence, inequality, and attempts to eradicate entire cultures, just to name a few. If you anticipate distress from one of the scheduled topics, and know you won’t be able to participate in class, please come and talk to me ahead of time, and we’ll see if we can work out some sort of alternative for the session. If you need to leave class because something like this comes up, please make sure to check in with me afterwards so I know what’s going on. Beyond what is written on the syllabus, you shouldn’t expect warnings about content, because not everyone reacts the same way, and things will of course come up in discussions that are unplanned. Please also recognize that feeling uncomfortable, or even being angry or offended, is a normal part of the learning experience. (Anyone with ethical sensitivities should get angry about some of the things we discuss!) This is different than feeling triggered, which usually refers to a manifestation of post-traumatic stress, an emotional response based on previous trauma that one can’t control. Please don’t confuse being uncomfortable with being triggered. Again, please come and talk to me if you are experiencing anything like this.
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## General Education Designation and Objectives

### Examples:

- 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 (G).
- 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.
- 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)
- 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 cultural deliberation. These skills are ones that are not specific to anthropology, but rather, will **translate into any field of study and any line of work**.

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## Equivalent to Main Campus Section and Workload Beyond Class Time

### Examples:

- 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.
- The course is equivalent to sections taught on the main campus in terms of content, credit, difficulty, and workload—just structured differently.
- 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.

**Critical Course Information:** Short and succinct means students will read it. Goals and objectives give it meaning.

**Do Expect:**

To complete writing assignments that are meant to ensure that there is depth to your \*understanding\* of the topics we discuss.

To have lots of questions even after a thorough reading.

To spend around one hour reading ten pages (though of course this varies from person to person and from paper to paper).

To take a lot of notes on the readings and to write down questions, concerns and ideas ahead of time to bring to class.

To compare and contrast authors' arguments, and to discuss what you think their strengths and weaknesses are.

To use simple, straightforward language in your writing that allows you to be as clear as possible.

To re-read the assigned articles or to talk to me or your classmates when you are confused about a reading or topic.

**Do Not Expect:**

To complete tests or quizzes that are meant to ensure that you \*remember\* anything in particular about the readings.

To understand the readings completely after your first time reading them.

To be able to read ten pages in a few minutes, as you may be able to do when reading science, history, literature, etc.

To do the readings without taking notes on them, or to come to class without formulating your questions or comments ahead of time.

To hold on to your own views on these issues without considering their relation to the arguments the authors give.

To use fancy language that makes your writing sound more professional or sophisticated.

To browse the internet for help understanding the assigned material—I guarantee that, overall, this will not help you; it will only confuse you more.

**NEW!**

<b>Goal:</b>	<b>Method:</b>
Students should strengthen their ability to read and understand arguments.	We will work toward this goal by carefully engaging with frequent reading assignments
Students should become better able to distinguish between good and bad arguments, formulate their own arguments, and adequately respond to bad arguments.	We will work toward this goal through class discussion and group activities
Students should develop their ability to carefully and accurately articulate their own views and the views of others.	We will work toward this goal through frequent, short writing assignments, and some longer essays
Students should learn about some of the most important and plausible ways of responding to certain moral questions.	We will work toward this goal by considering the arguments of some of the most well-respected philosophers in applied ethics
Students should understand the significance of the material we are discussing and its relevance to other classes and their lives more generally	We will work toward this goal through class and group discussions and through in-class journaling

## RAP Component: What makes a RAP course unique?

**Include the following paragraph in your syllabus. You may include additional course-specific information.**

This course is a Residential Academic Program (RAP) course. It is equivalent in content, credit, and workload to the non-RAP affiliated course section taught on the main campus. The advantage of a RAP course is that it is intended to facilitate a smooth transition to college life. This means that we will talk about some of the different campus resources that are available to you (e.g. Writing Center, Learning Resource Center, Five College Libraries and databases). We will also cultivate the skills that will help you in all of our college courses step by step, and we will make connections between this course, other courses, and life experiences. We will check in on these different components regularly throughout the semester because self-reflection is a key step to know how we learn and how we can improve our learning skills, too. As a part of your participation in this RAP course, you are **required** to attend a **virtual RAP Wellbeing Session** once during the semester dates and details will be provided. You will also be required to complete the **RAP Mid-Semester Feedback Survey** in class using your laptop, during week six of the semester.

## **Class Environment:** Mutual respect fosters success, so spell it out.

### **Examples:**

- **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.”
- **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. Refrain from interrupting your classmates. 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](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/campuspolicies/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.”
- **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. 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.
- **Classroom Etiquette:** Proper classroom etiquette is expected and enforced. Any activity that distracts other students is strictly prohibited. This is not limited to talking during lecture, but also includes texting, surfing the web, sleeping, and reading other material. Students using laptops must sit in the designated laptop section of the classroom. If a student interferes with the classroom’s learning environment, I will ask the student to leave. Cell phones should be silenced at all times. **Texting is prohibited in class.**
- The internet is filled with rich material from all lifestyles. With that being said, user generated content can display prejudice and/or bias that borders and/or embodies racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, xenophobic, or otherwise oppressive ideas. Under no circumstances will sourced media that display prejudice or bias be accepted or tolerated in this classroom setting.

## Class Environment: Mutual respect fosters success, so spell it out.

- Continued enrollment in this class implies acceptance of the following agreements: In class, be prepared, positive, willing, respectful and authentic. Please do not be afraid to raise your hand. I will not pretend to know everything about the readings, and I will not expect you to either. It is my goal to balance out the discussion amongst all members of the class and to foster a positive learning community. This may mean students who speak regularly may have to curtail comments, and those who do not feel comfortable will be expected to move out of their comfort zone to speak up. Perhaps most importantly, remember that you might hold different opinions on a topic than others in the class. Many of the topics we will cover are controversial or sensitive. **Please keep both your ears and mind open to these alternative views and be respectful.**
- The use of laptops is prohibited during class meetings—except when completing the RAP mid-semester survey on week 6 and the course evaluation on the last day of class. In this course you will take handwritten notes, which studies have shown to improve knowledge synthesis and recall.
- I have a No Screen Policy in class. Notes should be taken by hand. Laptops, phones, and tablets distract people, they detract from face-to-face connection and empathy, and they worsen your retention of information compared to hand-writing notes. So, put them away when you come into class. The one time this policy will be suspended will be on a designated day during week 6 of the semester, when everyone should bring their laptops to class for the RAP Mid-Semester Feedback Survey **Cell phones must be turned off (not “vibrate” mode) prior to the start of discussion...**
- Please be sure to turn off your cell phone and/or tablet before class starts. Students caught texting, Tweeting, “Facebooking,” and engaging in other distracting activities, will be asked to “cease and desist” or leave the classroom. If asked to leave, you will be marked absent for that class.
- Come to class on time with appropriate materials for taking notes. You may want to bring assigned readings. Please don’t pack up your stuff until after the class is over.
- Scholars who have studied the use of laptops in the classroom have found that “students who used laptops in class spent considerable time multitasking and that the laptop use posed a significant distraction n to both users and fellow students. Most importantly, the level of laptop use was negatively related to several measures of student learning, including self-reported understanding of course material and overall course performance.”<sup>1</sup> If you believe you have a valid reason for using a laptop for note-taking purposes, please see me and we can discuss your situation. Otherwise, please do not use a laptop while in class. 1. Fried, Carrie B. 2008. “In-class laptop use and its effects on student learning.” *Computers & Education* Vol. 50, pp. 906-914.
- Names, Pronouns and Language Everyone has the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that they use for themselves. In order for me to use your preferred/chosen name and pronouns, if they are not listed in Spire please let me know! You will not be asked to, but you may share your preferred pronoun with the class. We will all respect these choices throughout the semester. More generally, it is important to be mindful of our language!
- During class time, we will engage in thoughtful and analytic discussion of specific topics raised by the readings and episodes. My aim is to provide you with a comfortable space to ask questions, improve your critical reasoning and argumentative skills, and reflect on important topics in social/political philosophy. This is a joint endeavor: we are here to help each other think through challenging issues. To that end, we want to make sure that we listen and speak to one another with respect and kindness. Disagreement is a (arguably essential) part of philosophical discussions. However, disagreement need not be hostile or aggressive. Here is a strategy I find helpful for keeping philosophical discussions productive and respectful: If you disagree with the position an author, classmate, or myself is defending, engage with the position by offering reasons you think the position is problematic.
- **NEW!** No cellphones allowed. It is not appropriate to check your phone while in class. If you are expecting an important call, please let your instructor know before the beginning of class, and quietly

**Class Environment:** Mutual respect fosters success, so spell it out.

step out of the room when you need to take the call. Laptops and tablets are allowed only for reading or group work. Studies show that handwritten notetaking improves cognitive skills. Using electronic devices for other purposes will result in an absence for that class meeting.

- **NEW!** Students who desire to use their laptops for note-taking must make arrangements with me at the beginning of the semester.
- **NEW!** Do/Go over all assigned readings/materials before class.
- **NEW!** Listen and be respectful to one another.
- **NEW!** Participate, don't dominate.
- **NEW!** Arrive on time.
- **NEW!** Refrain from excessive use of electronics.
- **NEW!** Click [here](#) to see UMass' Guidelines for Classroom Civility and Respect
- **NEW!** As a class, we will collectively develop our class values and norms. However, here are a few crucial expectations to get us started:
  - Be respectful to your classmates and instructor.
  - Listen deeply
  - Step up/Step back- everyone has an important perspective so please make sure to share yours and make room for other people to share theirs
  - Please arrive on time and do not pack up to leave before class ends
- **NEW!** You are expected to be respectful of your peers and me. I encourage debates and welcome differing viewpoints, but I will not tolerate disrespectful behavior, whether it is directed at me or other students. See the following link for campus classroom conduct policies:  
[http://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/campus-policies/classroom](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/campus-policies/classroom)
- **NEW!** Classroom Prohibitions: (1) late arrivals or early exits (2) eating (3) private conversations

**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”.
- 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.)
- An absence may be excused if: a) It is approved by the instructor, b) there is written documentation from a health care professional, or c) you have a religious reason that is disclosed to the instructor at least one week in advance. Two or more unexcused absences are grounds for failing this course. If you are experiencing challenges making it to class, please contact me as soon as possible so we can explore options, resources, and support to ensure your success.
- 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.
- You are responsible for everything that is covered in class, whether or not you are physically present, no matter what the reason for your absence. If you are absent, for any reason (including documented medical emergency or religious observance), it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. If a serious illness or other documented emergency prevents you from attending three or more classes, please contact me right away to explore possible accommodations. Each situation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Documentation of your emergency/illness will be required.

**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.
- I will sometimes call on students at random.
- While in class, you are expected to actively participate. Participation for this course can take several forms, including answering instructor questions, asking clarifying questions on course material, and engaging productively with your peer during group work and class discussion. Participation accounts for up to half of your attendance credit and can be received by showing engagement in one of the three ways listed above. The best way to prepare for discussion is to come to class on time, having done the readings with at least one question or comment about them. Please note that participating in class discussion means not only speaking in class, but also being aware of classroom dynamics to ensure that you are not monopolizing discussions. While I encourage shy students to speak in class, I also expect those who do feel comfortable speaking to avoid doing so excessively, so that others will also feel comfortable participating. 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.
- Note that participation is not the same thing as attendance. Please do not think you have to wait until you have something brilliant to say before contributing: It could be a question about something you are confused about, an addition on a topic from a reading you have done in a different course, or simply answering a prompt about one of the assigned readings from that week. I am pretty generous about giving out participation credit, as long as you are making an effort. If you are having trouble participating, please come and talk to me, and we can discuss strategies to make it easier.
- 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:**

- 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 notepaper 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?

## Class Attendance & 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?

- You will be evaluated on the quality of your participation, NOT mere quantity. Dominating class discussions is no guarantee that you will get a high participation score. The best preparation is to come to class, ON TIME, having done the readings with at least one question or comment about them.
- Class participation will be monitored weekly, but your grade will be awarded in one lump sum at the end of the semester.
- As part of a truly inclusive experience in this class, students and the instructor will set the basis for what it means to “participate” in class together on week 3. This will mean that we will arrive at a common definition that will take into account students’ and instructor’s perspectives and voices. Broadly, students are expected to participate in discussion, engage with the topics, and be respectful and courteous to others’ opinions.
- During each class, you will be expected to discuss the readings and share your ideas with your peers. Each class period is worth 4 points. A student automatically receives two points for attending class. If a student makes only one or two brief comments, they will receive 3 points for that day. If a student participates actively in the discussion by offering multiple comments and questions, then they will receive 4 points. If a student, however, is actively disruptive, late, or looking at their phone, they will receive fewer than 2 points.
- **NEW!** This is a discussion centered course, so active participation is required. Active participation consists of coming to class regularly and on time, having read the course readings, completed any assignments due and be ready to contribute to the course discussion. **REMEMBER: You don’t have to say a lot but what you say should contribute to the conversation in a meaningful way.**
- **NEW!** This course is discussion-based. This means that you are expected to participate, both in individually and in small groups, throughout the semester. One of our main goals is to create a learning community that fosters and encourages open dialogue and respectful discussion of the various themes and topics we will examine. To that end, you should come to class prepared to discuss and participate. Please consult the course schedule and use your planner to plan your reading week.

### 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**
- Deadlines exist to help us move through material, complete projects, and receive meaningful feedback. Sometimes, circumstances outside of our control make it difficult to satisfy deadlines. In you find yourself in such a circumstance and become concerned that you will not be able to make a deadline for this class, please come talk to me about receiving an extension on your assignment. If you receive an extension, you we receive a new, later deadline on which the assignment can be submitted for full credit. Sickness, family emergencies, and major projects due for other classes are all legitimate reasons to ask for an extension. Importantly, extensions must be requested in advance of the relevant deadline.
- **NEW!** No late work will be accepted for the class unless students have made prior arrangements with the instructor or unless the work is late due to excused absences. Late work submitted without an extension from the instructor will affect assignment grade negatively (1 full point per day assignment is late).
- **NEW!** Students will have three grace period days to be used throughout the semester to be applied against any late assignments. This means that you need not ask for an extension for up to 3 assignments late by one day each, or however you choose to use them. Once you have exhausted your late assignment allowance, you must request an extension at least 48 hours in advance of an assignment’s due date.
- **NEW!** All assignments are submitted on Moodle. They are always due **on the due date before 11:59pm**. Your assignment grade will be deducted by a half-grade for *each calendar day* that it is late. (A to A-, A- to B+, etc.)

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

#### **Example:**

- 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

### **APP SUGGESTION** – This is an app suggestion based on its use by a current RAP instructor

**Perusall**, from their website: “We aim to change the nature of reading — from the traditional solitary experience to an engaging and collective one. We aim to change education — so all students do the reading, come to class prepared, and are motivated to do so because they care about the content. And we aim to advance behavioral science and AI research in the service of improving education — using our work at Harvard University and Perusall Labs to improve the Perusall platform and to help students, educators, researchers, and society at large.”

#### **Description of its use by instructor:**

“Each of the readings will be made available to you through a link on Moodle to Persuall. Persuall is a platform that allows you to highlight, comment on, and ask questions about the readings as you are reading them. It also allows you to communicate with your classmates as they are reading either by replying to their comments and questions or by starting personal chats with them.

You are required to complete all of the readings through Persuall (except the ones marked as optional, if there are any) and to interact with them in the ways described above. Persuall will automatically calculate a grade (through magic, I think) based on the quality of your contributions. Your contributions are due at 10:00 am the day of the class in which we are scheduled to discuss the relevant readings; that way, I can take a look at everyone’s thoughts on the readings before the class begins. Late contributions will not contribute to your grade. Of course, if you have mitigating circumstances, I am open to making exceptions to this rule. Always feel free to talk to me about things that make it difficult to complete work in time so that we can figure out together the best way to move forward.”



## 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](#).
- Keep in mind that there are also good reasons for requesting accommodations that are not related to disabilities. The Dean of Student's Office has the following to say about the resources they provide to students:

The Student Life Team within the Dean of Students Office focuses on assisting students with personal or academic challenges. Typical reasons students and families seek assistance from the Student Life team include, but not limited to the following:

- Difficulty Transitioning to College Life
- Missing Classes/Significantly Behind in Coursework
- Injury or Illness
- Experiencing Depression, Anxiety, Panic and/or other general mental health concerns
- Financial Struggles/Homelessness
- Victim of a Physical/Sexual Assault or Harassing Behavior
- Relationship Challenges/Domestic Violence
- Victim of Bullying
- Alcohol or Drug Abuse
- Eating or Exercise Disorder
- Need to Access Multiple Campus Resources
- Not sure where to access help

When appropriate, they may request accommodations from your instructors on your behalf. If you think that you may be able to benefit from the resources they provide, I encourage you to reach out them. For contact information, visit: [https://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/contact-us](https://www.umass.edu/dean_students/contact-us).

### Remind Students About This Throughout the Semester!

#### Examples:

- 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: [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*.
- Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent. Please note that I may evaluate any suspect papers/posts through Turnitin.com as part of the grading process.
- 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: [Academic Honesty](#)
- Intellectual Property The lectures and discussions are the instructor's intellectual property and are protected by federal copyright law. You are authorized to take notes in class, and to create a derivative work from my lecture, but my authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your own personal use. You are not authorized to record my lectures, to provide your notes or class material to anyone outside of the class, or to make any commercial use of them without my prior written permission.
- **NEW!** Academic dishonesty **will not be tolerated** in this course. Forms of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, cheating, helping others cheat, plagiarism, fabricating excuses for class absences, signing the attendance sheet without attending lecture, or signing the attendance sheet for absent classmates. ***If caught cheating and/or plagiarizing at any point during the semester, you will face punishment ranging from failure of the assignment to expulsion from the university.*** UMass Academic Regulations (2009) defines plagiarism as "knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise. This includes submitting without citation, in whole or in part, prewritten term papers of another or the research of another, including but not limited to commercial vendors who sell or distribute such materials." For more information on academic honesty, see the following links:  
<http://www.umass.edu/honesty/>  
<http://www.umass.edu/academichonesty/>

**Examples:**

- 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.
- **Do Not Be a Stranger!** Students who regularly attend class and/or office hours tend to receive 1-2 letter grades higher than students who do neither of these things. More than that, the more contact you make with me, the better prepared I am to write you a letter of recommendation or advocate on your behalf! If you cannot make my office hours, send me an email and I would be happy to work out another arrangement with you.
- **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.
- Please respect a 48-hour moratorium on discussing individual grades. **I will not discuss individual grades via email or in class during lecture. I will meet with you during office hours or a scheduled appointment.**
- **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.

## Miscellaneous: Other information you may want to include.

- **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.
  - **Late Work Policy:** No late work will be accepted for the class unless students have made prior arrangements with the instructor or unless the work is late due to excused absences.
  - **Deadlines:** You are responsible for submitting assignments and completing presentations by the scheduled due dates and times. Unless otherwise indicated, if an assignment is not completed on time, 10% will be deducted automatically. An additional 10% will be deducted each day the assignment is late. Late work will not be accepted after three days past the due date unless I have granted prior approval.
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### 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.
- ❖ **Critically Engage:** This course is not about memorizing everything and repeating it. You are required to think critically and analyze important issues regarding the history of the United States during the twentieth century. You will be encouraged to make connections between the readings, the lectures, the music, and the world today.
- ❖ Critically engage during class. Ask questions...
- ❖ Talk to me! If you have questions about ideas or concepts in the readings contact me via email or during my office hours.
- ❖ Plan! Use your planner to record assignments and due dates so you're not caught off-guard by work.
- ❖ Talk to each other! Consider forming study groups with each other to discuss the readings, watch the assigned films or talk more directly about the music.

### Miscellaneous: Other information you may want to include.

- ❖ Visit the [Writing Center](#)! You can make an appointment to go over assignments or to improve writing/study skills.
- ❖ As a research institution, our university's [library services](#) offer various resources to aid in your research pursuits. [This page](#) provides more information on how to start research for any topic.
- ❖ **NEW!** As the Instructor, I will be prepared for class, read and return your work in a timely manner, and be interested and engaged in your work. I'll remember that each of you brings a different background, experience, and perspective to this course; be open to learning from you; meet with you individually upon request, be available in person and by e-mail.
- ❖ **NEW!** One of the main goals of this course is to teach you how to conduct historical research. As such, you will be reading documents created during the era we are studying. Some of these documents use antiquated terms such as "negro" or "colored." One of the skills you will practice throughout the semester is contextual analysis, an important component of which is recognizing that some words or phrases once thought to be acceptable are now offensive in conversation. With the exception of directly quoting a document in your written work, these terms should not be used in common discourse.
- ❖ **NEW!** Title IX: It is important that everyone in our class and on our campus is familiar with reporting procedures for sexual harassment and violence at UMass. Please visit the Title IX webpage at <http://www.umass.edu/titleix> and the Sexual & Relationship Violence Resource Guide at [http://www.umass.edu/titleix/sites/default/files/documents/sexual\\_violence\\_resource\\_guide-09-15.pdf](http://www.umass.edu/titleix/sites/default/files/documents/sexual_violence_resource_guide-09-15.pdf) to find more information about resources and reporting options. If you want to file a complaint, make a report, or find out about resources, you can contact Débora Ferreira, Title IX coordinator at [equalopportunity@admin.umass.edu](mailto:equalopportunity@admin.umass.edu) or (413) 545-3464.