

Course Policies
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Office Hours

I enjoy conversation with students, and I welcome your visits throughout the term. Office hours are noted on each syllabus. You are also welcome to make an appointment.

Norms of Graduate Education

When you enter a Master's degree program, you are no longer a consumer of information but an apprentice to wisdom. So alongside the specifics of class assignments, there are two interrelated norms of graduate-level education I use to assess your work. First, as a graduate student you are expected to achieve mastery of the theoretical, methodological and topical knowledge of your courses. This includes the ability to engage in independent research, writing and presentations of a rigorous and persuasive nature. Second, as a member of a learning community, you are expected to be fully engaged in critical reflection and interpretation of the theories, methods and topics that inform our individual and collective approach to human-animal studies.

Universal Requirement

My courses are structured as seminars with substantial dialogue between students and professor. This requires that students arrive at each session prepared to discuss the readings and topics for the day. All readings and other assignments relevant to a given week's class discussion must be completed prior to that class. While each of my courses requires a substantial amount of reading, I do not 'pad' syllabi with 'extras' hoping you will look at 'something'. Instead, I expect you to finish the assigned readings and be completely familiar with their content. If you come across unfamiliar terms or concepts in the course of your readings, I expect you to use resources like Wikipedia, Ethics Updates, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*, and other works of reference to fill-in gaps in your knowledge. Active and creative participation in class discussion is an essential part of the seminar. Books, etc. are used in class, so please bring them with you. Coursework is assigned throughout the term. Attendance is required, excepting cases of medical emergency.

Praxis

There is nothing more important than internalizing the knowledge gained in graduate school, and then deploying it to help one better understand the world. The universal requirement noted above is

intended to help you internalize knowledge. Praxis will help you deploy that knowledge. For more on this requirement, see the *Praxis* handout.

Content Notice

One distinctive feature of human beings is the unavoidable role of values in describing, explaining and justifying our thoughts and actions. As a consequence, there can be no value-free science, brute facts, or entirely disinterested point of view. Because values are a crucial dimension of our inquiry, my courses routinely examine controversial moral and political questions.

As part of this examination, you will be required to critically evaluate your own and others viewpoints. You are not expected to agree with either peers, guests or the professor on broad issues or worldviews. You are, however, expected to provide a reasoned account of your own viewpoints, and respectfully engage the viewpoints of others. 'Everyone has a right to their opinion, but that does not mean that all opinions are equally right'. This requires an open heart and mind, as well as a gentle spirit towards yourself and others. We are all best served if we are willing to discuss difficult issues without recrimination, avoid the giving or taking of personal offense in disagreement, and employ the principle of charitable interpretation -- look for the insights in another's point of view, and set those in resonant conjunction with your own.

Please note that if you disagree, take umbrage or are offended by something you read or hear, you are not excused from learning, discussing or writing about it. And if the frank discussion of diverse perspectives troubles you, or you have difficulty understanding the insights of others, then my courses will prove particularly challenging. Do talk with me about your concerns and difficulties, and I will try to help.

Carpe Diem

Human-animal studies is a fascinating, leading-edge discipline, and your growing knowledge of its ethical, legal, social, scientific and policy dimensions will forever change how you experience and look at the world. As an interdisciplinary field of learning, it can also pose quite a challenge. The volume of information is large, and the learning curve is steep. One of my goals is to help you meet this challenge and achieve your academic personal best. To do so I stress empirical and theoretical knowledge, inquiry-based active learning, critical thinking, and intellectual discipline. It is also the reason I function as a no-nonsense academic coach, pushing you beyond your comfort zone so you perform at your highest intellectual capacity. Finally, if you really wish to excel, I recommend learning techniques such as annotated reading, concept mapping and study groups.

Grades

I evaluate your academic performance using a flexible mix of methods, including tests, papers, projects and participation. My expectations are high, as scholarship should be rigorous. At the same time, I happily reward good work. I do this by providing multiple opportunities for you to test well, minimizing the overwhelming importance of any single grade, and refusing to curve grades up or down so no one is penalized if everyone does well.

I grade on a percentage scale in five degree increments (95%, 90%, 85%, etc.). Final grades are assigned on an A-F plus-minus scale. See the chart below. A final grades of A, A-, B+, B, or B- is required for a course to count towards graduation. If you earn a C+ or lower, then you will have to repeat the course, take an equivalent course, and earn a grade of B- or higher.

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A	=	93 and above
A-	=	90-92
B+	=	87-89
B	=	83-86
B-	=	80-82
C+	=	77-79
C	=	73-76
C-	=	70-72
D+	=	67-69
D	=	63-66
D-	=	60-62
F	=	59 or below

Grading Benchmarks

What do the above grades mean? For starters see the list immediately below.

A = Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.

B = Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.

C = Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.

D = Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.

F = Represents failure and signifies that the work was at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit, or was not completed.

I = An incomplete (I) is assigned at the discretion of the instructor, when a temporary extension for the completion of work is due to extraordinary circumstances, such as a medical or psychological emergency.

More specifically....

- Overall Quality of Work
 - A -- Always turns in outstanding work that *exceeds* the requirements. Sets a standard that can be used as a guidepost for other students. Demonstrates a high level of knowledge and analytical skills.
 - B -- Turns in work that is consistently good and meets or exceeds all requirements. Knowledge and analytical skills are strong, with room for improvement.
 - C -- Completes work that is competent and meets minimal requirements. Knowledge and analytical skills are strong in some respect, weak in others.
 - D -- Work often does not meet minimal requirements. Knowledge and analytical skills are poor
 - F -- Work consistently fails to meet minimal requirements. Knowledge and analytical skills are meager.
- Deadlines
 - A -- Submits all work on time.
 - B -- Submits all work on time.
 - C -- Submits most work on time or close to the due date.

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- D -- Often does not meet deadlines.
- F -- Fails to submit assignments.
- Attendance
 - A --Attends all classes.
 - B -- Attends virtually all classes, missing a few for extenuating circumstances.
 - C -- Attends most classes but has several unexplained absences.
 - D -- Poor attendance, with numerous unexplained absences.
 - F -- Poor attendance, with numerous unexplained absences.
- Pursuit
 - A -- *Does not work for grade alone.* Works for what is to be gained from each learning experience. Always prepared for class, reads and thinks about the material in advance. Alert and attentive in class. Participates consistently, making a substantial contribution to discussion.
 - B -- *Genuinely interested* in a positive learning experience. Usually prepared for class, reads ahead. Alert and attentive in class. Participates consistently in discussion.
 - C -- Somewhat interested, but *intellectually lethargic*. May be unprepared and reads ahead inconstantly. Makes few contributions to class discussion.
 - D -- *Unconcerned* with the class and sometimes hostile to the learning process. Usually unprepared and rarely reads ahead. Rarely participates in class discussion.
 - F -- *Hostile or impervious* to the learning process. Does not complete readings or assignments. Rarely participates in class discussion.

Participation

I require active participation in every class. There are many ways to participate -- making germane comments, asking questions, listening carefully, taking notes, prior preparation, and positive contributions to collaborative work. Overall, my primary expectation is that you be present in the moment, that is, be 'alive' in class and prepared to interact in a variety of ways (commenting, questioning, listening, note-taking, etc.). While I take great delight in discussion, I recognize that some people are very verbal, others are shy. For especially gregarious folks, I ask that you make every effort to listen as well as talk. For quiet folks, I ask that you make your best verbal contributions to our dialogue. Poor participation is a serious shortcoming, while excellent participation is a decisive advantage.

Outstanding course participation offers the opportunity to bump your grade into a higher level (e.g. B+ to A-), while poor participation may drop it a level (e.g. A- to B+). Grades for participation are assigned as follows, with room for individual variation.

A	=	Excellent on an everyday basis
A-	=	Excellent
B+	=	Very good with moments of excellence
B	=	Very good
B-	=	Good
C+	=	Average with moments of excellence
C	=	Average with promise
C-	=	Average

- D+ = Poor with moments of excellence
- D = Poor with indications that more is possible
- D- = Poor
- F = Failing

I judge a student’s participation based on their demonstrated ability to observe, listen, write, ask questions, and exercise leadership in collaborative work. The benchmarks below indicate what I look for in your interactions with me and each other.

Observation	may range from...	ignoring and distracted	...to...	aware and engaged.
Listening		passive hearing		active listening.
Writing		minimal		maximal.
Questioning		pro forma		probing.
Collaborative roles		free-rider		leader.

Tests, Papers and Projects

Tests probe two knowledge areas. The first is your comprehension of the readings, including (but not limited to) concepts, theories, methods, philosophies, agents, structures, issues, context and data. The second is your comprehension of lectures, discussions, and guest speakers. Objective tests assess your basic knowledge, while narrative tests assess your ability to research, reason and communicate. The format of objective tests varies, and includes multiple-choice, matching, true-false, short answer, short essay, take-home essay, concept mapping, projects, and papers. These tests may be graded and/or discussed in class. Narrative testing takes the form of papers and projects such as oral presentations, moderated debates, book reviews, literature reviews, narrative slide-shows, and research papers (to name a few).

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations provide professors valuable information, and for this reason they are mandatory in my courses. I take evaluations quite seriously, and use them as a point of departure for improving the content, materials, and structure of each class. Students generally evaluate a course once or twice each semester. Because my questions are specific and comprehensive, I always use them in place of (or addition to) generic institutional evaluations. The evaluation form has two sections, one quantitative and the other narrative. From these evaluations I construct a report where the quantitative results are tabulated, and the full set of written comments are incorporated. Small spelling and grammar corrections may be made when it does not materially affect meaning. Course evaluations are completed either in-class or via the internet, and are due shortly after the end of finals week.

Challenge

No one is perfect, least of all me! Sometimes my testing questions are ambiguous; sometimes there are implications to my essay questions I do not foresee; and sometimes I make grading errors. For these reasons, you may challenge your grade on any assignment.

For example, to ‘earn-back’ percentage points on a test, you need not provide a drop-dead, unassailable and brilliant deduction. You only need to point out my error, or provide a reasonable and evidence-based argument for an alternative interpretation. In the latter case, I shall explore the

full range of your understanding of the concepts, facts, and values relevant to that question. You need not be perfect (I never demand that), but you do need to be knowledgeable and well prepared. A successful re-grading will earn back lost points, while an unsuccessful re-grading will not affect your grade. You must, however, seek re-grading within one week of an assignments return. After these time frames, all grades are final.

Workload

One credit in this course is equivalent to three or more hours of learning effort per week. This is the effort necessary for an average student (a C student) to achieve an average grade (a C grade) in this course.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty in any portion of a course is grounds for being failed in the entire course. Examples include but are not limited to falsification (e.g. of data), misrepresentation (e.g. of results) and plagiarism (e.g. using the work of others as if it were one's own).

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is grounds for dismissal from class or the course. Examples include but are not limited to denigrating comments towards one's professors or peers, and disruptive activity in classes and fieldtrips.

Building on Prior Work

While I encourage you to make use of prior work, please do so with care. For example, you might plan on using a portion of the work done in one class, to meet part of the requirements of another class. In such instances, you must seek approval ahead of time from me, properly credit where the work is drawn from, and make sure the overall work you are doing meets the workload requirements of the current assignment.

Late Assignments and Make-Ups

All assignments are due at the time and date they are due. Late assignments will be marked down. If you plan to miss class, submit your assignment early. I do not provide make-up tests. If you miss a test and/or presentation for a legitimate reason, you are not penalized, but your final grade is based on fewer tests and/or presentations. If you miss the deadline for a paper, then we will reschedule your deadline. Legitimate reasons are limited to documented medical emergencies, family tragedies or debilitating psychological crises.

Attendance and Incompletes

Attendance for all seminars, tests, projects, and field-trips is mandatory. You are responsible for making the appointed time, even if it conflicts with other activities or your work schedule. I do not grant incompletes unless you receive permission from me, in advance, and for a documented medical emergency, family tragedy or debilitating psychological crisis.

Computers, Email and Multimedia

In my courses, all students must have direct access to a computer, email and the web. I post virtually all my content at Tufts University Science Knowledgebase (TUSK), an educational web portal at www.tusk.tufts.edu. Here you can find syllabi, assignments, tests, readings and other materials. Please visit TUSK and familiarize yourself with its operation.

Students may not use computers to take notes in class, but you are welcome to bring your laptops to look up information when it is appropriate.

Please note that I do not provide advice on computer, software or internet configurations. For help with computing problems, please contact the IT HelpDesk at www.tufts.edu/vet/its.

I prefer direct conversation to email. When you do email me, keep several things in mind. First, treat all email as a public communication. If your question is something that the class would benefit from knowing, I will send my response to the entire class. Second, be patient as you wait for my response, and if your question is complicated, I may choose to answer in person. Third, if you are upset about something, please wait before you fire-off that letter of complaint. It is always better to let an issue cool a tad. I respect students who stand up for themselves. And like all of you, I like to be treated with respect as well.

My syllabi may include assignments or enrichment activities that involve DVDs, podcasts and the like. You will therefore need access to services like Netflix (www.netflix.com) and Apple iTunes (www.apple.com/itunes).

Testing and Grading Online

The advent of educational portals like Blackboard and TUSK makes the online administration of tests and reporting of grade possible and convenient. Whenever I can use this method, I do.

My online tests are open book and use ‘mixed measures’, e.g. true/false, matching, multiple choice, fill-in the blank, short answer, and short essay. One or more of these measures are used in each test.

The scope of a particular test corresponds to a particular portion of the syllabus. Unless otherwise noted, the title of the test corresponds to the title of a course section. You should therefore review your readings, class notes and any other material from the course that is directly relevant to the topic of the test. If there is relevant background knowledge from other courses that will help you understand the material to be tested, you should review this material too.

Note that when answering questions on these tests, please choose or write the *best* answer in light of the question itself. Don’t over-interpret the question. Don’t assume that a partially correct answer is the best answer. Don’t assume that because no answer is perfect, you can’t distinguish between better and worse answers.

Tests will be available on the due date from 1200 to 2000. You may take up to two hours to complete a test. Please start your test well before the end of the testing period, and ensure you encounter no distractions. Otherwise, you may run out of time.

Grades. Please see the *Syllabus* and *Course Guidelines* on TUSK for more information on grading.

TUSK. Tests, assignments and other materials are available on TUSK, www.tusk.tufts.edu.

Advice. For advice on how to study for and take tests, please see the *Study and Testing Tips* handout on TUSK.