

Guidelines for Recitation Instructors

Department of English

Assisting with a large lecture course is a wonderful opportunity for a graduate student to develop teaching skills, benefit from faculty mentorship, co-teach with members of the graduate community, and build his/her teaching experience and portfolio. Below are some guidelines and information for first-time recitation instructors.

1. Lectures

Attendance at all lectures is mandatory. It is disrespectful of your colleagues to miss lectures. Even if you are already familiar with the material, you need to attend lectures in order to plan recitations that support the aims of the course as a whole. It is also hard to implement an attendance policy with students if recitation instructors are repeatedly absent themselves. If you do have to miss a lecture, let the professor know as soon as possible. Ask for lecture notes so you can catch up on missed content.

Some faculty members will ask you to deliver one lecture during the semester. If you are unclear as to whether this is expected of you, ask for clarification early in the term. As your teaching mentor, the professor can offer guidance on how to design a lecture. It can be very helpful to have lecturing experience on your c.v.

2. Recitations

This is your primary responsibility for the semester. You are expected to complete all assigned readings for the lectures and recitations in order to lead group discussions and facilitate close examinations of the texts. Professors will vary as to the level of uniformity they expect across recitations, but at the least you will need to address questions and concepts from lecture, and come prepared to each recitation with a lesson plan.

Unless the professor amends the schedule, you are expected to hold all recitation meetings for the semester. Cancelling a section meeting should be a last resort and only in the event of illness, emergencies or unavoidable conflicts. If you need to cancel a recitation, you should notify the professor and students immediately to discuss arrangements for making up the material (a substitute recitation leader, make-up sessions, or additional office hours).

The professor will come to observe your recitation once during the semester. This will allow him/her to provide constructive feedback and write a detailed teaching letter.

3. Grading

Your other major responsibility as a recitation instructor is grading. At the beginning of the semester, decide how you will record and organize grades (ideally in a spreadsheet form). If the professor uses the Gradebook function of NYU Classes, you will need to

enter grades there as well. Consult with the professor and co-instructors about standard grading rubrics for evaluating papers and exams. Follow whatever methods the professor has outlined to convert letter grades to numbers, evaluate participation, and calculate final grades; do not hesitate to ask if anything is unclear.

A quick turnaround for papers means students receive more meaningful feedback. Timely grading is also required at mid- and end-of-semester periods so grades can be posted on Albert in time.

The Family Educational Records Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits the disclosure of a student's academic records without his/her consent. Do not leave graded materials out in a public unmonitored place. If you leave them in a box outside your office door, for example, you should take them in when you leave for the day. Do not discard unretrieved papers or exams without first consulting the professor (it is possible the professor will want to keep them for a few months in case a grading dispute arises).

You should take attendance at section meetings, especially if attendance will factor into students' participation grades. When problems arise with students, be sure to keep documentation and bring your concerns to the professor's attention as soon as possible.

4. Exams and Exam Period

The term does not end with the last day of classes. During the exam period, students will often want to meet to discuss final papers and exam materials. You should hold your regular office hours and also be available to meet with the professor and co-instructors about exam-writing and grading.

You should plan to be in attendance at all exams. Cheating does occur in large lecture courses, and you should take your proctoring duties seriously. Unless the professor tells you otherwise, please refrain from reading, texting or working on your laptop during the test-taking.

5. Meetings with the Professor

Many professors will schedule regular meetings with all recitation instructors. This is an opportunity for you to discuss recitation form and content, share strategies and tips on teaching, and bring up any problems or concerns. These meetings are for your benefit.