

4/16/03

## Guidelines for Great Books Teachers

2003-2004

### Auburn University

On the first day of classes students should be given a **syllabus** which provides them with information about your course and directs their attention to **Great Books website**, which contains important policy information. **Your syllabus should address the following topics:**

1. **Course Objectives.** The course-wide objectives for Great Books are described on the course website, but your syllabus should indicate objectives specific to your course. These may be related to your particular reading and writing assignments and to the specific focus of your course; they should be compatible with the common objectives for the course. Because many students assume that Great Books is not a writing course, you should stress the importance of the reciprocal skills of reading and writing in all core courses.
2. **Organization.** Here you should make students aware of the rationale for your specific course and begin to establish the connections between reading assignments, writing assignments, and the course objectives.
3. **Texts.** Here you should list the texts for your course. You should provide clear information about which edition or translation of a text students should buy. Instructors and GTAs who are teaching Great Books at Auburn for the first time should consider using one of the following recommended texts: *The Longman Anthology of World Literature*; *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*; *The Bedford Anthology of World Literature*; *Literature of the Western World* [Macmillan]; or *The HarperCollins World Reader*.
4. **Assignments.** Here you should give a schedule of daily assignments, including all readings, all major writing assignments, and examinations. The length of reading assignments will vary with the type and relative difficulty of the texts; ideally you should try to balance a sense of responsibility for helping your students meet challenging course objectives with a realistic sense of what they can be expected to accomplish each day.

Readings in Great Books 1 and 2. The European renaissance provides a rough chronological division between the two courses. Because the Great Books committee advocates **chronological diversity** in the choice of texts, it encourages representation from each of the following Western chronological periods: for **Great Books 1**—ancient, medieval, and Renaissance; for **Great Books 2**—the enlightenment, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century. The Committee also advocates **cultural diversity** in the choice of texts. For **each** course, teachers are encouraged to create a balanced syllabus that represents the following kinds of texts: [1] works originally written in English; [2] works not originally written in English; [3] works by women; and [4] works by members of minority groups within Western culture **or** by members of non-Western cultures.

While the *emphasis* of the course will vary from teacher to teacher, students should finish Great Books with a good working knowledge of the texts they have read and of the literary and cultural contexts of these works. They should have a basic but clear sense of literary history of the periods covered by your course and should be able to situate their readings chronologically within it.

Writing Assignments. In each course students must write a minimum of 2400 words to be graded and returned before the last class day. While writings can include short in-class and out-of-class assignments as well as longer essays, **each class must require** either two longer papers **or** one longer paper and a full revision which will be treated as a separate assignment. Students should be given a reasonably detailed written assignment for each of these longer papers.

Writing assignments in the Great Books sequence build on the kinds of skills students learn in English composition—the basic mechanics of writing standard English; basic essay organization; thesis formulation; rhetorical analysis; writing for a particular audience; etc. Writing in Great Books should

involve applying these skills to literary interpretation. Over the two courses, writing assignments should develop and refine students' ability to engage in concrete textual analysis; articulate and advance well-supported theses based on arguable propositions; offer specific claims that avoid unsubstantiated and sweeping generalizations; move well beyond paraphrase and summary to engage and utilize the language of the text as a fundamental form of evidence for a thesis; understand that writing is a form of critical thinking; and attain a style and level of discourse commensurate with a third and fourth English course.

Examinations. Your course **should include carefully supervised mid-term and final examinations with substantial writing components.** Take-home exams should not be substituted for timed, proctored examinations.

5. **Grading.** The syllabus should indicate how the final grade will be determined. A recommended distribution is:

Writing	25-30%
Class work (discussion, quizzes)	15-25%
Mid-term examination	20-25%
Final examination	20-30%

Your syllabus should indicate what the grade penalty will be in your course for work submitted late (e.g. five points per day; ten points per day with a zero after the third day, etc.). In addition, Great Books teachers are encouraged to make daily work count by including it as a substantial factor in the final grade.

As a control on work done outside of class, you may specify that the final grade will not be higher than the average of supervised, in-class writing and examinations. If you adopt this policy, it must be stated on the syllabus.

6. **Policies.** The Great Books website includes policies on Attendance, Assigned Work, Reading Quizzes and Other Daily Work and Academic Honesty. Teachers are encouraged to adopt these common policies and to call students' attention to them **both orally and in writing.** If your course policies vary from these stated ones, you should note that clearly on your syllabus.

7. **Students with Disabilities.** Your syllabus should include a statement of the policy on students with disabilities. Students with documented disabilities should be encouraged to make an appointment to meet with you early in the semester to discuss accommodations. Students requesting accommodations are required to have a letter from the Office for Students with Disabilities specifying the kinds of adjustments or assistance that may be needed in your course. If you have questions about disabilities services or accommodations for a particular student, you may find it helpful to talk to Dr. Kelly Haynes, Director, Program for Students with Disabilities, 844-2096.

8. **Questions.** If you have questions concerning Great Books teaching, please contact, Constance C. Relihan, Coordinator of the Great Books Program, 8060 Haley Center, 844-9028.

**[PLEASE NOTE: We are in the process of changing the title of these courses from Great Books I & II to World Literature I & II.]**