

GRADUATE STUDENT TEACHING SEMINAR SUMMER TEACHING LOGISTICS

TEACHING YOUR OWN SECTION

You may lead your own section as an instructor either during the year or during the summer. During the year, most graduate students work with a course chair who sets up the syllabus and is responsible for writing the exams. The course chair may also coordinate the homework assignments. In that case, your responsibilities are to deliver lectures to your students (about 20-35 students) on the material, to schedule their homework assignments, to hold office hours, and to work with a teaching assistant if you have one. You will also participate in the logistics of the course by writing questions for exams, proctoring exams, and grading exams (just as you do as a TA). At the end of the course, you will assign grades to your students.

During the summer, you have many more responsibilities, as we now discuss.

SUMMER TEACHING, THE LOGISTICS

Syllabus: Get the syllabus from the past semester, so that you know what should be covered. You can find this on the old course webpage. Sarah Willor should also be able to get you a copy.

Your syllabus should contain the following:

- Your contact information, including the best way to reach you.
- Textbook information (which book, edition, etc.)
- Exam dates and times. These should be established before the first meeting, so that students can easily see whether they have conflicts with other courses. They should not be changed after the course begins.
- Grading policy. Students should have a clear idea of how their grades will be computed, including how much each exam will contribute to their final score. This should not be changed after the term begins.

You need to have a syllabus available for students by the first class meeting, either as a paper copy to distribute in class or a publicly-accessible course web page with the syllabus (or both).

It is good to plan out globally where you want to be in your course at certain points. Course chairs typically put up what material should be done each week, but they won't have that over the summer. This helps ensure that you will cover all the material that students are supposed to see. You can look at the pace during the regular semester to help you gauge what the pace should be in a summer course.

Note for summer instructors: It's very important that you cover all the material in the standard syllabus from the academic year, even though it may be a struggle to fit it all into the compressed summer schedule. These courses are all prerequisites for further courses and future instructors will assume that your students know the same things as the ones who took the course during the academic year.

Most classes meet for 90 minutes, 5 days a week in the summer. Note that 131 and 132 are 4 credit courses, so in the summer, they meet for 1 hour 45 minutes and one more week than the other classes. As such, you might plan to use time during class (say 45 minutes, twice a week) as a discussion. It's also a good idea to build a review class into the schedule just before your exams.

You can expect about 10-25 students per class. You can use your SPIRE account to find the class list (with pictures), create an email list, and upload your final grades.

Office Hours: Since your course meets every day, there isn't much choice in office hours. But since most people commute in the summer, it seems most useful having office hours adjacent to the class time. People often work in the summer, and some people can't stay after class, so it is useful to have office hours before class on some days.

Exams: Looking at old exams helps in at least two ways:

- (1) Old exams give you an idea of the kinds of problems that have withstood the test of time.
- (2) Knowing what's in old exams keeps things fair. You don't want to give exams that are significantly easier or harder than those taken by students in past versions of your course.

Ask the course chair from the previous semester to send you some old exams. These are also generally floating around the department (and can often be found on old webpages).

Homework: Choose problems carefully. Class meets every day for 1.5 hours, so two days of a summer course corresponds to approximately one week of a regular semester course. But, students will not have a whole week to do a week's worth of work. So, experience has taught that the total number of problems assigned over the regular semester is too much to assign over a summer semester. You should instead try to assign enough problems to solidify ideas, keeping in mind the inherent time constraints of a summer course.

As during the regular semester courses, homework for many courses will now be distributed and graded through an online system. For 131-132-233, we use Webassign; for 127-128, we use WileyPlus.

Copying: Joy is not typically around in the summer, so you will need to get a copying code from Carla Mokrezecki to use the small copier on the 16th floor. Sarah Willor will handle making copies in the summer for large jobs if that is necessary.

OTHER ISSUES TO CONSIDER FOR SUMMER TEACHING

- Should you create a course webpage? It's good practice and gives an easy way to communicate with your students, for them to see a record of the sections covered, to obtain a syllabus, etc. One possibility is to use a UMass-hosted blog instead; many instructors now do this. But setting up either of these may not be worth the effort, since classes are small and you will have a lot of face-time with your students.
- Calculator policy for exams? You must decide your own policy. It's good to look at past syllabi for your course in the regular semester offerings, to see what the conventions are.
- Note sheet for exams? Same as above.
- Handing out or posting old exams for student practice? This always makes them happy. But make sure they know that yours might look different, may emphasize different material, etc.
- Ilona will provide more logistics before summer teaching starts.
- Talk to Ilona or us about issues that arise. Don't be shy!
- For more serious matters regarding discipline, talk to the Department (Co) Head
- Grading: It's important that grades be comparable to ones for the same course during the academic year, but the (typically) smaller sections in the summer make it hard to suggest particular percentages for As, Bs, etc. (Sample size effects can be huge, and the pool of students taking the courses in the summer is different, too.) We'll talk more about this, but it might be a good idea for you to talk to one or more recent course chairs and try to get an idea of how to calibrate performance to letter grades. And don't hesitate to talk to faculty during the summer if you have questions about this. You should also be very careful about keeping records of grades in a form that can be passed on to the department—we often get questions about how grades were determined after TAs have moved on.

OTHER THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DURING THE YEAR OR DURING THE SUMMER

- Tutoring. During the academic year, we have the Calculus Help Center (for Math 131, 132, 233, 127, and 128). The main library has tutoring hours in the evening.
- Room scheduling for reviews: you must fill out a request slip in Sarah's office.
- Learning disabilities: some students may be authorized to have more time on exams or other special accommodations (such as calculator usage on all exams, exams given in a nondistracting environment). Such students need to provide you with written documentation from the Disability Services Office. (During the academic year, at least, the Disability Services Office will send you an e-mail saying that particular students have been authorized for special arrangements. But it's up to the student to actually request an accommodation from you. Students may be authorized for accommodations that they decide not to use.)
- Cheating: see www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/#process. Roughly speaking, if you catch a student cheating, you must first discuss it with the

student and try to come to an agreement. If you can't resolve it with the student, a formal process must be initiated. It's always a good idea to let your course chair know what's going on if you suspect a student of cheating.

- For questions about teaching, talk to one of us.
- For problems with your course chair, talk to the Department (Co) Head.