

MEMORANDUM

TO: University Faculty

FROM: Anne Veeger, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Initiatives

DATE: January 7, 2021

SUBJECT: Spring 2021 Semester Information and Course Syllabus Guidance

Dear Faculty,

Happy New Year. I hope you have had a chance to unwind a bit after completion of a very challenging fall semester. The start of the spring semester is three weeks away and I want to provide some important updates, along with the more traditional syllabus information that you may find helpful as you develop your course syllabi and prepare for the coming semester. Visit <https://web.uri.edu/coronavirus/> for information about the URI COVID response and spring opening plans and copies of all communications distributed by URI Communications

NEWS & EVENTS

- **Last Day to archive/migrate from Sakai, January 8th** - Faculty can submit a Service Desk ticket if they would like help migrating content off the Sakai server. The IT-TLS team is holding special drop-in virtual support sessions the week of January 4th to help faculty. See <https://its.uri.edu/training/> for support sessions.
- **Sharing Challenges and Finding Solutions for Next Semester, January 8th and January 19th** - Join an ATL Conversation on "*Sharing Challenges and Finding Solutions for Next Semester*" – an opportunity for faculty to come together to discuss their experiences with online, blended, and face-to-face teaching during the fall semester and work collaboratively to explore strategies for the spring semester. They are offering two opportunities, on January 8th and again on January 19th, 11-noon. <https://web.uri.edu/teach/atl-conversations/>
- **One-week Hybrid Online Bootcamp, January 11-15** - ATL is offering a **one-week Hybrid Online Bootcamp the week of January 11-15**. This intensive 1-week workshop will equip you to create a mixed modality course, using asynchronous and synchronous activities and tools. **Please note: this course is NOT self-paced.** Each lesson operates with due dates for discussions and assignments, and to be successful, you must participate fully. One synchronous meeting is required – on Tuesday 1/12 from 2pm – 3:15pm. On all other days, there are asynchronous assignments due at 2pm. Registration information [can be found here.](#)
- **ITS Tech Day, January 14th** – ITS is offering a full day of educational technology training sessions to introduce faculty to educational tools and strategies. Participants can choose session slots from seven tracks throughout the day. See <https://its.uri.edu/tech-day/> for details and registrations information.
- **URI Academic Summit, January 21st** - URI will hold its annual [Academic Summit](#) on Thursday January 21st from 9 am to 3pm, and we encourage all faculty to attend this virtual event. This year's topic is ***Antiracism at URI: Academic Curriculum and Pedagogy***, with special guest Ibram X. Kendi. Summit details, agenda and registration are available here: <https://web.uri.edu/provost/academic-summit/>

- **ITS Service desk** is virtual! The ITS website (<https://its.uri.edu>) shows all virtual support hours in a dedicated box right at the top, includes a searchable resource center and a password help ticket. Key resources for faculty are available here: <https://its.uri.edu/faculty-key-services/>
- **Brightspace** – If you have not done so already, please complete the self-paced Brightspace course to familiarize yourself with the university’s LMS - <https://web.uri.edu/teachonline/basic-brightspace-training/>. Videos for faculty and students on Brightspace and other technologies remain available on ATL’s [Teach Online at URI YouTube Channel](#)
- **Missed a Summer 2020 ATL Conversation or Town Hall you were interested in?** Recorded portions are available via URI login here: <web.uri.edu/teach/atl-conversations/> Videos for faculty and students on Brightspace and other technologies remain available on ATL’s [Teach Online at URI YouTube Channel](#)
- **[Spring 2021 Academic Calendar](#)** - Note – All classes will be fully online the first 4 days of the semester, from Jan. 26 through Jan. 29, and in-person and blended classes will shift to or include scheduled in-person meetings starting Feb. 1. There will be no spring break in March and the last day of classes will be Monday April 26th, with finals beginning on April 30th.
- **Fall 2020 IDEA results** are available for review - <https://web.uri.edu/provost/idea/>.

COVID-19 UPDATES

PPE FOR FACULTY/GRADUATE STUDENTS TEACHING FACE-TO-FACE: The university is providing PPE for faculty teaching face-to-face. Contact your department chair/program director regarding PPE needs. Wipes and hand sanitizer are distributed throughout the buildings and classrooms. Information about requesting PPE is available here: <https://web.uri.edu/emergency/files/COVID-Supply-Distribution-Memo-20200625.pdf>

STUDENT RETURN TO CAMPUS: All students, including Rhode Island residents, will be required to complete a 10- day quarantine upon arrival in Rhode Island and returning to URI’s campuses. The dates for spring classes and move-in have been adapted to allow for the full 10- day quarantine for all students, no matter what state they reside in. All students are strongly encouraged to get a test 72 to 48 hours before moving back to their on-campus or off-campus housing and all students residing in Rhode Island, including those taking online courses and those commuting to the state to take in-person and blended classes, are required to be tested at a URI testing center to start the spring semester.

ALL CLASSES ARE ONLINE FOR THE FIRST 4 DAYS OF THE SEMESTER: All classes will be fully online the first 4 days of the semester, from Jan. 26 through Jan. 29, and in-person and blended classes will shift to or include in-person meetings starting Feb. 1. This will allow all students to complete a full 10-day quarantine prior to returning to face-to-face academic activities on campus.

ASYMPTOMATIC SURVEILLANCE TESTING: All students will be required to complete regular asymptomatic testing throughout the semester. Faculty and staff have access to free, no-appointment testing during the winter break and throughout the semester. Faculty teaching in-person classes are encouraged to get tested during the week of 1/25-1/29, prior to the start of in person-class meetings on 2/1 and continue with routine testing every other week throughout the semester. Information on testing hours is available here: <https://web.uri.edu/healthservices/covid-testing-hours/>

RHODY CONNECT APP: Encourage students to download the [Rhody Connect](#) app - a one-stop shop for all things related to life at URI. Access to the daily health self-assessment, study space information, events, classes, dining menus, etc.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH: The [URI Counseling Center](#) helps students through counseling referrals, outreach programs and self-assessments. Their services are available virtually and they have developed a “mental Health and Wellness during Covid-19” resource page for students: <https://web.uri.edu/counseling/during-covid-19/>

COVID SYLLABUS STATEMENT: *As we prepare to resume classes this fall, I ask that each of you please include the following (or similar) language in your syllabi:*

The University is committed to delivering its educational mission while protecting the health and safety of our students. At this uncertain time, those concerns include minimizing the potential spread of COVID-19 within our community. While the university has worked to create a healthy learning environment for all, it is up to all of us to ensure our campus stays that way.

As members of the URI community, students are required to comply with standards of conduct and take precautions to keep themselves and others safe. Students are required to comply with Rhode Island state laws, including the Rhode Island Executive Orders related to health and safety, ordinances, regulations, and guidance adopted by the University as it relates to public health crises, such as COVID-19.

[An addendum on policies and guidelines concerning your obligations](#) during this crisis has recently been integrated into the Student Handbook. These obligations include:

- Wearing of face masks by all community members when on a URI campus in the presence of others
- Maintaining physical distancing of at least six feet at all times
- Following state rules on the number of individuals allowed in a group gathering
- Completing a [daily health self-assessment](#) also available through the [Rhody Connect](#) app before coming to campus
- Submitting to COVID-19 testing as the University monitors the health of our community
- Following the University's quarantine and isolation requirements

If you answer yes to any of the questions on the daily health assessment, do not come to class. YOU MUST STAY HOME/IN YOUR ROOM and notify URI Health Services via phone at 401-874-2246 immediately.

If you are already on campus and start to feel ill, you need to remove yourself from the public and notify URI Health Services via phone immediately at 401-874-2246 and go home/back to your room and self-isolate while you await direction from Health Services.

If you are unable to attend class, please notify me at 874-xxxx or xxx@uri.edu or through the medium we have established for the class. We will work together to ensure that course instruction and work is completed for the semester.

SYLLABUS QUICK TIPS FOR SPRING 2021: Please visit <https://web.uri.edu/teach/syllabus/> for syllabus resources.

- Use assigned seats for face-to-face classes
- Establish virtual office hours, by appointment or for drop-in, for all course modalities
- Clearly indicate which platforms students will need to use and where to find them, and provide an orientation to your course site
- Have students complete the student [Brightspace training](#) and encourage them to complete the [AEC Academic Success modules](#)
- Establish online class conduct and communication expectations in collaboration with your students
- Clearly communicate class attendance/participation expectations for all course modalities
- Communicate options for remote participation and accommodating absences
- Use the course calendar in Brightspace so that students can easily find all due dates and course milestones
- Asynchronous online courses do not have a scheduled final exam timeslot and should use an asynchronous assessment, if administering a final exam. Please consult with the [ATL](#) for support and resources regarding assessment strategies for your online courses.

Student feedback and suggestions from Fall 2020:

- Students felt isolated and are looking for more opportunities for synchronous engagement with peers and instructors. Virtual office hours, synchronous discussion/problem solving sessions, and study groups are some ways to create connection in online classes.
- Students reportedly struggled to keep track of assignments. Assignments created with due dates that are embedded in a to-do list will appear on the student's calendar on their home page and make it easy for them to find what they need to do next. If students submit their work using the assignment tool, they will clearly see if they have completed the required work.
- Students commented that it would be easier if there was more consistency in how faculty set up their classes in Brightspace. [Import a 14-week template to get started](#) and create a "start here" video with navigation instructions about where things are in your class

STUDENT SUPPORT AND SUCCESS

SYLLABUS STATEMENTS: We ask you to include these statements (or similar) in your syllabi:

Anti-Bias Syllabus Statement: We respect the rights and dignity of each individual and group. We reject prejudice and intolerance, and we work to understand differences. We believe that equity and inclusion are critical components for campus community members to thrive. If you are a target or a witness of a bias incident, you are encouraged to submit a report to the URI Bias Response Team at www.uri.edu/brt. There you will also find people and resources to help.

Disability Services for Students Statement: Your access in this course is important. Please send me your Disability Services for Students (DSS) accommodation letter early in the semester so that we have adequate time to discuss and arrange your approved academic accommodations. If you have not yet established services through DSS, please contact them to engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations in the classroom. DSS can be reached by calling: 401-874-2098, visiting: web.uri.edu/disability, or emailing: dss@etal.uri.edu. We are available to meet with students enrolled in Kingston as well as Providence courses.

Academic Enhancement Center (for undergraduate courses): Located in Roosevelt Hall, the AEC offers free face-to-face and web-based services to undergraduate students seeking academic support. Peer tutoring is available for STEM-related courses by appointment online and in-person. The Writing Center offers peer tutoring focused on supporting undergraduate writers at any stage of a writing assignment. The UCS160 course and academic skills consultations offer students strategies and activities aimed at improving their studying and test-taking skills. Complete details about each of these programs, up-to-date schedules, contact information and self-service study resources are all available on the AEC website, uri.edu/aec.

If you wish to include additional information about their services:

- **STEM Tutoring** helps students navigate 100 and 200 level math, chemistry, physics, biology, and other select STEM courses. The STEM Tutoring program offers free online and limited in-person peer tutoring this spring. Undergraduates in introductory STEM courses have a variety of small group times to choose from and can select occasional or weekly appointments. Appointments and locations will be visible in the TutorTrac system beginning on January 26th, 2021. The TutorTrac application is available through URI Microsoft 365 single sign-on and by visiting aec.uri.edu. More detailed information and instructions can be found at uri.edu/aec/tutoring.
- **Academic Skills Development** resources help students plan work, manage time, and study more effectively. In Spring 2021, all Academic Skills and Strategies programming are offered both online and in-person. UCS160: Success in Higher Education is a one-credit course on developing a more effective approach to studying. Academic Consultations are 30-minute, 1 to 1 appointments that students can schedule on Starfish with Dr. David Hayes to address individual academic issues. Study Your Way to Success is a self-guided web portal connecting students to tips and strategies on studying and time management related topics. For more information on these programs, visit uri.edu/aec/academic-skills or contact Dr. Hayes directly at davidhayes@uri.edu.

- **The Undergraduate Writing Center** provides free writing support to students in any class, at any stage of the writing process: from understanding an assignment and brainstorming ideas, to developing, organizing, and revising a draft. Spring 2021 services are offered through two online options: 1) real-time synchronous appointments with a peer consultant (25- and 50-minute slots, available Sunday - Friday), and 2) written asynchronous consultations with a 24-hour turn-around response time (available Monday - Friday). Synchronous appointments hosted by WC Online are video-based, with audio, chat, document-sharing, and live captioning capabilities, to meet a range of accessibility needs. View the synchronous and asynchronous schedules and book online, visit uri.mywconline.com.

Graduate Writing Center (for graduate courses): The [Graduate Writing Center](#) provides writing support to all URI doctoral and master's students to foster continuing development of academic and professional writing skills necessary to succeed in graduate programs and academic or professional careers.

ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: To ensure that we are supporting the success of all students, course materials need to be accessible (e.g., videos, audio recording, texts, etc.) in face-to-face, blended and fully online courses.

[The Office of Disability Services for Students](#) provides [resources for faculty and staff](#).

[The Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning](#) also has resources available:

<https://web.uri.edu/teachonline/basics-of-accessibility-online/>.

[ITS Instructional Technology and Media Services](#) provides information and support about [captioning video content](#). Adding captioning to video content is an essential step in making videos accessible to all viewers – especially for learners who are deaf or have low hearing. Captions are also shown to increase comprehension for students whose native language is different from what is spoken in the video.

UNIVERSITY MANUAL REQUIREMENTS

Please familiarize yourself with [Chapter 8](#) of the University Manual which contains important academic regulations.

Course Syllabus Requirement ([University Manual 8.50.30](#)) – According to the University Manual: “*All instructors shall make available a syllabus in the first week of class, or first day of class for fully-online accelerated programs (8.51.24), to students enrolled in each of their courses. Syllabi components should clearly communicate classroom policies, essential aspects of the course, and expectations of student participation.*”

In addition to satisfying Faculty Senate approved policies, your syllabus communicates mutual expectations between you and your students and serves as a roadmap to successful course completion, including your course scope, expectations, learning outcomes, deadlines, attendance policies, grading criteria, and other important information. Please provide students with information about assessment/major paper/project due dates, office hours, availability of special tutorial sessions, and expectations on individual vs group work. This clear outlining of expectations helps to ensure that students in your classes understand how they will be assessed and are fully aware of your academic standards. Providing such information can help avoid misunderstanding, frustration—on both sides—and foster acceptance of responsibility by our students.

A topic of considerable recent debate, is the use of technology during class and examinations, e.g., cell phones, iPads, laptops, etc. You may wish to include guidelines related to their use in your syllabus.

If you are Interested in learning more on this topic, see article from Yale Poorvu Center on Teaching and Learning on Use of Electronic Devices in Class: <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/Using-Electronic-Devices-in-Class>.

As you develop your courses and syllabi, please refer to the faculty development resources offered through the Office for the [Advancement of Teaching and Learning](#), including the [syllabus development resources](#) and the [Faculty Information](#) web page for links to information on teaching & advising, technology, research and administration/policies.

The *University Manual* also contains information that is helpful in preparing your syllabus. I refer particularly to the following sections in [Chapter 8 of the Manual: 8.27.10-19](#) (plagiarism—instructor's responsibilities, judicial action, and student's responsibilities); [8.39.10-12](#) (attendance); and [8.51.10-27](#) (examinations). Each semester, issues are directed to this office that are addressed specifically in these sections.

Final Exams - Please pay special attention to section [8.51.16](#), which states the University's long-standing policy regarding administering examinations during the final week of classes -
... Final examinations are not required by the university, but any final examination, with the exception of take-home examinations, must be administered according to the final examination schedule prepared by the Office of Enrollment Services.Faculty members cannot administer an examination during the last five days classes are in session in lieu of a final examination, but must instead postpone such an examination to be administered according to the final examination schedule.

In order to avoid conflicts with final examinations, it is helpful to list the time of the final for your course in the syllabus and to provide students with the link to the final exam schedule so they can plan ahead. (Final exam schedule will be posted at <https://web.uri.edu/enrollment/final-exam-schedules/>)

- NOTE: Asynchronous online courses do not have a scheduled final exam timeslot and should use an asynchronous assessment, if administering a final exam. Please consult with the [ATL](#) for support and resources regarding assessment strategies for your online courses.

OTHER TOPICS

FERPA - Please be aware in your communications with students and about a student's academic progress in your course, that FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) regulations prohibit any disclosure of “personally identifiable information” from a student’s “education record” without the prior written consent of the student. For more detailed information on FERPA regulations, please go to: <http://security.uri.edu/policies/ferpa/>

Video Capture – There are some privacy issues to consider for those faculty who are using video capture in their classrooms in order to make recordings available to students for review. If the video captures only the instructor and course materials, there are no issues. If the video captures images or voices of your students AND you intend to use these recordings in another class or for any another purpose, students must be notified of this in advance on the syllabus and you must provide accommodations for students who do not wish to appear in class recordings.

Academic Integrity - Understanding the culture of source management and attribution in academe is a process of learning and relearning, with increasing complexity over time. Our goal is to better distinguish between intentional plagiarism or cheating, and making mistakes. URI's Student Handbook (<http://web.uri.edu/studentconduct/student-handbook/>) provides guidelines concerning academic honesty in this regard. Additional assistance is available at the [Writing Center](#) and the [Academic Enhancement Center](#). It may be useful to add a statement in your syllabi using the following language:

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student's name on any written work, quiz or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student's own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student's own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty.

- *Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation*
- *Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently*
- *Unauthorized possession or access to exams*
- *Unauthorized communication during exams*
- *Unauthorized use of another's work or preparing work for another student*
- *Taking an exam for another student*
- *Altering or attempting to alter grades*
- *The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams*

- *Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references*
- *Facilitating or aiding another's academic dishonesty*
- *Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the instructors*

Student Feedback – URI uses the [IDEA Diagnostic Feedback Instrument](#) to collect student feedback. As you develop your syllabus and course learning objectives, please think ahead to their alignment with IDEA course objectives that will be measured at the end of the semester (see list below). Incorporation of relevant learning objectives in your course syllabus is likely to yield more reliable and informative student feedback on the IDEA feedback form at the end of your course. Instructors will be able to set IDEA objectives for their courses from March 1st to April 29th. While you may want your students to master many of the IDEA objectives, you should choose no more than 2 or 3 essential and 2 or 3 important objectives that are critical learning objectives for your course. Choosing a larger number of objectives will limit the usefulness of your feedback. The student response period begins ~2 weeks before the end of classes and closes at 11:59 pm on the last day of classes; students can use a variety of devices e.g. (laptop, cell phone, tablet) and in order to maximize response rates, faculty are encouraged to provide 15 minutes at the beginning of a class (if online synchronous) for students to complete the IDEA survey. Results are available to Instructors, Chairs, and Deans 2 days after official grades are officially posted for the semester.

The 13 IDEA course objectives are listed below for your convenience (with links to IDEA resources):

1. [Gaining a basic understanding of the subject \(e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories\)](#)
2. [Developing knowledge and understanding of diverse perspectives, global awareness, or other cultures](#)
3. [Learning to Apply Course Material \(to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions\)](#)
4. [Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course](#)
5. [Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team](#)
6. [Developing creative capacities \(inventing, designing, writing, performing in art, music, drama, etc.\)](#)
7. [Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity](#)
8. [Developing skill in expressing myself orally or in writing](#)
9. [Learning how to find, evaluate, and use resources to explore a topic in depth](#)
10. [Developing ethical reasoning and/or ethical decision making](#)
11. [Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view](#)
12. [Learning to apply knowledge and skills to benefit others or serve the public good](#)
13. [Learning appropriate methods for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting numerical information](#)

The Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning provides [support for setting your objectives and interpreting your results](#). If you would like to review the elements of the IDEA instrument, please go to: <https://www.ideaedu.org/Services/Student-Ratings-of-Instruction-Tools>. If you have questions about how the process works at URI or are looking for ways to increase response rates please visit: web.uri.edu/provost/idea-procedure, or contact Sean Krueger at, skrueger@uri.edu.

Thank you for all the work you do supporting the success of your students and best wishes for a safe and productive semester.

jvp
c: Academic Deans