

## First Day of Classes Memo

**Course Syllabi on Blackboard:** At the beginning of each semester, a copy of your syllabus is extracted from your course and placed in a repository for access by undergraduates looking to learn about UR courses for their future semester planning. The syllabus is only available in this way if you place it as a file upload or file attachment to an “item” in the Syllabus area of your course. **Please be sure to include your syllabus (as a file) for the upcoming semester in the menu area of your course to assist undergraduates in their planning.**

One additional benefit of uploading your syllabus is that the outreach librarian supporting your department/program will have access to it. Your outreach librarian will use this information to determine which library resources (e.g., databases, journals, and articles) and support (e.g., digital services, assignment design, ideas toward community engaged learning) would be most helpful to your students in your course.

**Credit Hour Policy on Course Syllabi:** Please be sure to review the credit hour policy, especially the sections on syllabus language (pages 3-5). This section describes the required syllabus language and “enriched independent study” for four-credit courses (and some other courses) that do not meet the anticipated number of hours per week for that number of credits. The policy can be found at: [https://www.rochester.edu/asei/get\\_file.php?id=6772](https://www.rochester.edu/asei/get_file.php?id=6772).

**Disability Resources – Adjustment to Course Policies:** In some situations, a student may have an episodic or unpredictable condition that may cause them to miss class, exams, or deadlines due to a flare up of their condition. In these cases, the Office of Disability Resources may determine that an academic adjustment to course policies is a reasonable accommodation, giving the student additional flexibility for assignment deadlines, flexibility in rescheduling tests and quizzes, and attendance. This accommodation does not require the instructor to alter the essential design and learning outcomes of the course. Faculty will be notified of an academic adjustment to course policy via an official Notification of Accommodations email from the Office of Disability Resources. A staff member from the Office of Disability Resources will contact the instructor to discuss and develop an Academic Adjustment to Course Policy Agreement which will establish the modified standards by which the student will be assessed.

*Please review the principles and procedures regarding the beginning of classes that appear below.*

One of our fundamental concerns is for the well-being of our students. If you are worried about any of your students, please consider referring them to the CARE team through the CARE System at [www.rochester.edu/care](http://www.rochester.edu/care). Identifying a student in distress or heading toward distress allows the CARE team to review your concern and determine an appropriate response to assist the student in need. For additional information, please consult the CARE website listed above or contact the CARE Administrator at 585-273-2568.

The principles and procedures regarding the beginning of classes are noted below. Please make relevant announcements about each of the following items.

**Nature of your Course and Assignments.** During the first several class sessions, an instructor should describe the nature of the course and indicate the variety of assignments that will occur during the entire semester. If e-mail or other technological tools will be used or expected, mention should be made in the syllabus and at the beginning of the semester. Assignments that are announced late in the course without any warning to the students often cause them problems that could have been avoided. If the course content or mode of instruction varies greatly from the published course description, the instructor should state this at the outset. Please be aware that some of our students experience financial hardship and may have difficulties purchasing all of the required course materials and textbooks. It will be helpful for you to let students know whether these materials are available on reserve in the library or in other ways.

**Prerequisites.** It is important that students in your course be aware of any existing pre- or co-requisites. Students who decide to take a course without having the necessary prerequisites may experience difficulties that could have been avoided.

**Class Attendance.** The faculty regulations do not require students to attend each class, but do permit instructors to establish regulations regarding class attendance. Many students falsely believe that class attendance is not important and act accordingly. Each instructor is expected to announce the rules regarding attendance in class to the students in that class. While instructors are authorized to state that attendance in class sessions is obligatory, they are encouraged to permit students to miss class when they have valid reasons, such as “away” games for varsity athletes or tournaments for members of the Debate team.

**Academic Honesty.** Academic honesty is of vital concern to the faculty and each discipline has its own specific set of issues. Students need to know the importance of integrity in undertaking scholarly work. They also need to hear from you about the spirit and the specific boundaries of legitimate behavior in the work in your particular course.

**As outlined in the Academic Honesty policy, all faculty must discuss the issue of academic dishonesty in their classrooms within the first two weeks of classes and explain how the College policy applies in each of their courses. Our policy also requires course instructors to include an academic honesty statement on each course syllabus or website indicating how the College policy applies in the course. It is particularly important that faculty discuss the academic procedures that may vary from discipline to discipline, such as proper and improper forms of academic collaboration, citation, and group work. Per the policy, instructors must also require students to sign an Honor Pledge on every examination.**

Helpful information for instructors may be found at <https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/instructors.html>. It is helpful to direct students to the academic honesty website at <https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/index.html>, but it is also important that they hear about this topic directly from you.

**Religious Holidays.** College policy and practice are that classes not be cancelled on religious holidays. It is expected, however, that students will not be penalized in any way for observing religious holidays. Instructors are asked not to schedule examinations in conflict with such holidays. New York State Education Law provides that students who choose not to attend classes or take exams, including final exams, on certain days because of their religious beliefs will be given an equivalent opportunity to make up the work requirements or exams they miss without penalties. Requiring a student to use the opportunity to skip or drop a test for this purpose is a penalty. The major Christian, Jewish and Muslim holidays for the 2019-2020 year can be found at <http://www.rochester.edu/chapel/services/holidays.html>.

**Basis for Grading in the Course.** Students need to know what is expected of them and need evidence of how well they are doing. They need to know about penalties associated with late assignments, missed assignments or examinations, missed classes, and they should be made aware of the faculty’s policy on 'Incomplete' grades.

**Tutoring and Study Skills Assistance.** Students who are doing poorly in their coursework should be encouraged to get assistance as early as possible in the semester so that they will perform satisfactorily. Some departments may have their own programs for assisting students having difficulties with courses. More generally the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Dewey Hall serves as the primary point of contact for students on the River Campus seeking tutoring and study skills services.

Faculty can find a lecture slide and flyer for use in communicating to students about CETL student services at: <https://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/faculty/resources.html>.

Students wanting more information may be directed to CETL in Dewey 1-154 or to <http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/index.html>.

**Support for Written and Oral Communication.** The Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program offers various support services for students of all abilities and academic backgrounds that are looking to enhance their ability to communicate effectively through writing and related modalities. Students can find information on these services at: <https://writing.rochester.edu/tutoring/index.html>.

**Midterm Examinations and Warnings.** Instructors are expected to provide students with some evidence of performance in courses by mid-semester. Examinations used for this purpose should be graded and returned by that time. The faculty regulations require instructors to notify my office, at mid-semester, of the names of students doing poorly in their courses. This information is particularly helpful for first-year students and their advisors. The Registrar's Office will send a memo in several weeks to all instructors that contains instructions for reporting midterm warnings. Midterm warnings may be submitted beginning in the fifth week of the semester through the tenth week of the semester.

**Reading Period.** The formal reading period begins on December 12. Final examinations begin on December 15. Per the Faculty Rules, **I ask that you adhere to this basic principle: the reading period helps students prepare for all of their final examinations. This means that no examinations of any kind may be given prior to the final exam period.** Although we discourage the practice, brief quizzes (but only of a non-cumulative nature) may be given during your regular class time in the last week of the semester. Instructors may schedule review sessions but not regular class meetings or examinations between December 12 and 14. You should explain to students how the reading period is being used at the beginning of the semester.

**PLEASE NOTE** the following items relating to registration procedures.

**Class Rosters.** First day rosters, and any subsequent rosters, can be downloaded and printed using Instructor ACCESS. Instructions for using ACCESS and for printing Rosters can be found at <http://www.rochester.edu/registrar/access.html>. Students having questions about their registration should be referred to the Academic Services Counter in Lattimore 312.

**Late Registration into your Course.** Unless you have indicated otherwise by setting a restriction, students who register for a course after the beginning of the third week of classes (September 16) need to obtain the signature of the instructor to provide evidence that the instructor is willing to admit the student. Instructors may refuse to sign an "add" slip when a student has not met a pre- or co-requisite, when the entrance of a student is otherwise inappropriate, is too late, or increases the class to an unacceptable size. Students may add four-credit independent studies courses (e.g., research/reading) until September 18, and all other courses until September 25.

**Withdrawals.** Students are permitted to withdraw from a course and have that course deleted from their record only during the first four weeks of the semester. Thereafter, students may withdraw from a course without written consent through the last day of the eleventh week of the semester (November 15); the course listing will remain on the advising record and a grade of "W" assigned, along with the week of the semester in which the course is dropped. Courses in which "W" grades have been assigned appear on the official transcript, but without the notation concerning the week.

**S/F Option.** All students must decide about taking courses on the Satisfactory/Fail Option by the end of the eleventh week of classes except that first-year students and transfer students in their first semester may declare or change the S/F Option through the thirteenth week. Instructors are not permitted to require that students take the course on the S/F Option; they are also not permitted to instruct students not to elect the Option. Pass/Fail (P/F) grades may be given only in those courses that are approved in advance by faculty action. Instructors who wonder whether their class is one of these, may rest assured that it is not. Each

instructor who is teaching such a course is painfully aware of the steps required to gain approval for that mode of grading.

**Classrooms.** If your classroom is unsatisfactory or for any reason you wish to change the room or the time for meeting your class, you must consult with the Registrar (275-5132 or 275-9828) prior to taking any action. The Registrar may also be contacted with any concerns about seating or lecterns. Questions regarding classroom technology should be addressed to Event and Classroom Management Services at 275-1438.