

Course Syllabus

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Syllabus 249:90

Biomedical Ethics

50:730:249

Online Platform: Canvas

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Office Hours: By appointment.

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I. Rationale:

This class will examine moral issues in medicine using the application of various moral theories and philosophical concepts. Topics to be covered include abortion, end of life decisions, physical-patient relationship, human enhancement, cloning, and others.

II. Course Aims and Objectives:

Aims

In general, the course aims to teach students how to analyze and evaluate bioethical arguments, to promote the development of thoughtful reflection about the reading materials, and to encourage critical evaluation of our beliefs and values.

Specific Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will:

- Be able to *define* key terms deployed by authors assigned in the course.
 - Key terms include principles and concepts developed by a unique author (e.g. the “greatest happiness principle” is a key term unique to J.S. Mill, and also general terms defined in a special way by different authors (e.g. “good” or “right” will be a key term that changes under different authors)).
 - Students will be expected to recall the definitions of key terms during class, and to explain key terms on take home writing assignments.
- Be able to *summarize* the main thesis of each essay assigned in the course.
 - The main thesis of an essay is the general or overarching conclusion advanced by an author. In order to summarize the thesis, students will need to be able to discriminate between different arguments advanced within an essay and evaluate which is the most general.
 - Students will be expected to propose essay thesis statements in class discussion and during in-class tests and take home assignments.
- Be able to *reconstruct* the key arguments and reasons used by the authors in support of their thesis.
 - A reconstruction of an essay is similar to an outline of an essay. In a reconstruction, students take the content of an essay and organize it in terms of a thesis statement and a series of claims or reasons offered by the author in support of the thesis.
 - To reconstruct an argument, students will need to identify and discriminate among a series of different reasons offered by an author to determine which ones would be most helpful in supporting an argument.
 - Students will be expected to participate orally in class collective reconstructions initially, but then will be expected to be able to reconstruct an essay in writing.
- Be able to *apply* previously learned philosophical terms and principles to concrete examples.

- The application of philosophical concepts to real world examples is an important way to test the plausibility of an author's argument. Students will practice creating counter-examples during class discussions, and will creatively apply an author's arguments to those counter-examples. Students will also be able to apply principles from one author to examples developed by another author.
- Students will be expected to apply key principles, terms, and concepts to examples during in class tests and on take home assignments.
- Be able to *evaluate* the appropriateness and plausibility of the conclusions reached in the assigned materials, and *compare* two competing arguments about a topic, giving reasons for their positive evaluation of one over the other.
 - The evaluation of philosophical arguments involves an appreciation for a charitably interpreted version of the argument, and the development of a critical dialogue between the proponent of the view and plausible objectors. Sometimes this requires the application of objections from the perspective of other assigned authors, but other times this requires the creative development of objections from one's own perspective.
 - Students will be expected to weigh reasons for and against arguments on essay assignments.

General Ed Requirements

1) Interpret, explain, and compare significant systems and theories of human ethics and/or values.

We will read about, discuss, and write about key ethical theories in the history of philosophy. The moral concepts invoked by Utilitarianism, Virtue ethics, and Kantian moral theories will be explored, with an emphasis on applications to ethical issues in medicine. Understanding moral values relevant to patient autonomy, informed consent, justice and health care, and conceptions of the good life, will be central to the focus of the course.

2). Analyze ethical debates in terms of their underlying assumptions and implications.

In all of our discussions, readings, and course assignments, emphasis will be placed on identifying the structure of philosophical arguments in these ethical debates, including the premises of the arguments, the validity and soundness of the arguments, and the implications of the arguments.

3). Recognize the ethical values at stake in practical, concrete, and/or everyday situations.

This course will allow us to apply sound philosophical/moral reasoning to concrete applied issues in medicine. Values including autonomy, justice, happiness / well-being, truth-telling, and others, will be examined within the context of moral problems in medicine.

III. Format and Procedures:

This course will proceed as an online class. Students will be expected to read all assigned material before taking quizzes, and to be prepared to ask questions about the terms and arguments developed in the essays.

IV. Tentative Course Schedule: ***This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the term, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.*

Below you will find a schedule of class assignments throughout the 13-week term. Here are some additional notes to help guide you through each section of the schedule:

Readings: For each class module, which lasts for one week of the class, you'll be assigned required readings from our textbook. Most are short in length to allow you time to read them through more than once, as they contain condensed arguments and new terms. The textbook includes a brief overview of each essay at the beginning of the reading. I recommend that you begin each set of assignments by reading through both the introductory passage and the reading questions in the Forum on Canvas to get a feel for the content before diving in.

Reading notes: I recommend that you maintain reading notes with the following information for each essay assigned: What is the thesis, or overarching goal of the essay? What are the most important arguments advanced by the author to support his or her thesis? What key terms are introduced by the author? Which ethical values are at stake in the essay?

Slides: I've designed Prezi slideshows to accompany the readings assigned. Slides can be advanced or paused at your own pace, and contain outlines of readings, explanations of key terms, and videos to help expand topics. Content on slides will appear on the review quizzes as outlined below. Slides can be found in each Module Overview page.

Quizzes (30%): After each set of readings you'll need to submit a review quiz on the Canvas site, which can be found under "Assignments". Quizzes concern the readings and slides. You may not use external resources (websites), you must work individually, and you may not include any quotes from readings or slides. Quizzes include 10 questions that concern material from the assigned module and questions from the reading assignment you've completed. Quizzes are due Thursdays at 10:00 p.m. and count toward your final grade (worth 30% of your course grade in total). Late submissions for quizzes will not be accepted. There are also no make-up quizzes. Quizzes will be run through Turnitin.com, plagiarism detection software. Penalties for violations of the rules of assignments and code of conduct range from failing a single Quiz to failing the course and/or disciplinary review by the Dean's office.

Forum Posts (25%): Throughout the course all students will be required to post questions about the readings and answers to your fellow student's questions. Forum posts are due twice each week on Tuesdays and Fridays at 10:00 p.m. Students are required to post at least twice each week to receive full credit. Grades will be based on the quality of explanation involved in both your own proposed question

from the reading and your answer to a question posed by another student. Forum participation is worth 25% of the course grade.

- Post 1, due Tuesdays at 10pm: Every student must generate at least one new discussion question about the reading assignment, *referencing specific page numbers*, and then propose an answer to their own question. Questions that repeat previous people's questions will not receive credit, so you should read over other people's questions before posting yours. Simple, easy questions will not be worth very much, so you should strive to ask a question that you think is challenging to answer. Please also spread out questions to cover all readings for the week, rather than everyone posting questions about the first reading only. Questions about the videos may be used to substitute questions about the readings.
- Post 2, due Fridays at 10pm: Every student must reply to at least one other student's question/answer with a comment, prompt for further explanation, suggested revision or alternate answer, or elaboration of the answer provided. You won't receive credit for restating the original question/answer or for comments that simply state that you agree with or like the original post. Your own post should help develop the line of reasoning introduced by the student. You may also use your second post as a way to reply to responses (Student A poses a question/answer, then Student B poses a suggested modification to that answer, then you respond to the modification).

Module One: Moral Theories and Perspectives

Readings: 1. Chapter One: General Introduction," pages 1-50.

Forum Posts: Optional, extra credit

Module Two (A): Patient-Physician Relationship

Readings:

1. "The Professional-Patient Relationship", 58-69.
2. "The Hippocratic Oath", 69.
3. "The Modern Hippocratic Oath", *Prezi Slideshow Module 1*.
4. Edmund D. Pellegrino, "The Virtuous Physician and the Ethics of Medicine",

70-73.

Quiz 1: Due thursday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Assignments")
Covers Modules 1 and 2A

Forum Posts: Due tuesday and Friday 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Discussions")

Module Two (B): Patient-Physician Relationship

Readings:

1. Roger Higgs, "On Telling Patients the Truth", 103-109.
2. James F. Childress and Mark Siegler, "Metaphors and Models of Doctor-Patient Relationships: Their Implications for Autonomy", 74-82.
3. Dan Ariely's TED Talk: "*Why we think it's OK to cheat and steal (sometimes)*"

Quiz 2: Due thursday 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Assignments")
Covers Module 2B readings

Forum Posts: Due tuesday and friday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Discussions")

Module Two (C): Patient-Physician Relationship

Readings:

1. Lisa Newton, "In Defense of the Traditional Nurse", 88-95.
2. Helga Khuse, "Advocacy or Subservience for the Sake of Patients?" 95-103.

Quiz 3: Due thursday 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Assignments")
Covers Module 2C readings

Forum Posts: Due tuesday and friday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Discussions")

Module Three (A): Informed Consent

- Readings:**
1. Justice Matthew O. Tobriner, "Majority Opinion in *Tarasoff V. Regents of the University of California*", 109-113.
 2. Justice William P. Clark, "Dissenting Opinion in *Tarasoff V. Regents of the University of California*", 113-116.

First Take Home Exam Overview

Quiz 4: Due thursday 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Assignments")
Covers Module 3A readings

Forum Posts: Due tuesday and friday 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Discussions")

Module Three (B): Informed Consent

Exam Week

- Readings:**
1. "The Values Underlying Informed Consent", 120-125.
 2. Howard Brody, "Transparency: Informed Consent in Primary Care", 126-132.
 3. Ruth Macklin, "Ethical Relativism in a Multicultural Society", 132-141.

Quiz: None

Forum Posts: Optional, extra credit

Exam: First Take Home Exam Due Oct. 11th at 10:00 p.m.

Sunday, : First Take Home Exam Due at 10:00 p.m.

The first take home exam will be submitted online via Canvas under “Assignments”. It will cover course content from Modules 1-3. Additional details are provided below, under “Course Requirements”.

Note: While you may use your textbook while writing the exam, you may not work with other students, nor may you use any outside resources, including websites or secondary reading materials. The take home exam will be submitted through turnitin.com, plagiarism software, which will detect any passages within your exam that have been taken from other resources. Failure to adhere to rules of the assignment and to the academic honesty policy listed above will result in further investigation and penalties. The best strategy to avoid plagiarizing material is to write the take home exam without the book open. That should prevent you from inadvertently copying too much from the language and explanation of the authors.

Module Four (A): Contested Therapies and Biomedical Enhancement

- Readings:**
1. “Contested Therapies and Biomedical Enhancement”, 144-155.
 2. Robert Crouch, “Letting the Deaf be Deaf: Reconsidering the Use of Cochlear Implants in Prelinguistically Deaf Children”, 155-162.
 3. Bonnie Poitras Tucker, “Deaf Culture, Cochlear Implants, and Elective Disability”, 162-167.

Quiz 5: Due thursday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, “Assignments”)
Covers Module 4A readings

Forum Posts: Due tuesday and friday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, “Discussions”)

Module Four (B): Contested Therapies and Biomedical Enhancement

- Readings:**
1. Sherri A. Groveman, “The Hanukkah Bush: Ethical Implications in the Clinical Management of Intersex”, 168-171.
 2. Franklin G. Miller, Howard Brody, and Kevin C. Chung, “Cosmetic Surgery and the Internal Morality of Medicine”, 187-195.

Quiz: None

Forum Posts: Due tuesdays and fridays at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Forum")

Module Four (C): Contested Therapies and Biomedical Enhancement

Readings:

1. David DeGrazia, "Prozac, Enhancement, and Self-Creation", 222-230.
2. Claudia Mills, "One Pill Makes you Smarter: An Ethical Appraisal of the Rise of Ritalin", 230-234.
- 3*. Sir Ken Robinson's RSA Talk: "Changing Education Paradigms"

Quiz 6: Due Thursday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Discussions")
Covers Modules 4B and 4C readings

Forum Posts: Due tuesday and friday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Discussions")

Module Five (A): The Morality of Suicide and Active Euthanasia

Readings:

1. "Suicide, Physician-Assisted Suicide, and Active Euthanasia", 376-384.
2. Immanuel Kant, "What is Suicide?" 385-387.
2. R.B. Brandt, "The Morality and Rationality of Suicide", 388-394.

Quiz 7: Due Thursday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Assignments")
Covers Module 5A readings

Forum Posts: Optional, extra credit

Module Five (B): The Morality of Suicide and Active Euthanasia

- Readings:**
1. James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia", 395-399.
 2. Daniel Callahan, "Killing and Allowing to Die", 399-401.
 3. Dan W. Brock, "Voluntary Active Euthanasia", 402-404.
 4. "The Oregon Death with Dignity Act", 421-426.
 5. Aubrey De Grey's TED Talk: "Undoing Reproductive Aging"

Quiz 8: Due at thursday 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Assignments")
Covers Module 5B readings

Forum Posts: Due tuesday and friday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Discussions")

Module Six (A): Genetics and Human Reproduction

- Readings:**
1. "Genetics and Human Reproduction", 523-533.
 2. Leon R. Kass, "Implications of Prenatal Diagnosis for the Human Right to Life", 533-537.
 3. Laura M. Purdy, "Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children be Immoral?" 538-543.
 4. John A Robertson, "Extending Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis: Medical and Non-medical Uses", 589-595.

Quiz 9: Due thursday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Assignments")
Covers Module 6A readings

Forum Posts: Due tuesday and friday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Forum")

Module Six (B): Genetics and Human Reproduction

Readings:

1. Leon R. Kass, "Cloning of Human Beings", 577-579.
2. Robert Wachbroit, "Genetic Encores: The Ethics of Human Cloning", 583-588.
3. Paul Root Wolpe's TED Talk, "It's Time to Start Questioning Bio-Engineering"

Quiz: None

Forum Posts: Optional, extra credit

Module Seven (A): Social Justice and Access to Health Care

Readings:

1. "Social Justice and Access to Health Care", 623-636.
2. Allen Buchanan, "Justice: A Philosophical Review", 639-649.
3. Kai Nielson, "Autonomy, Equality, and a Just Health Care System", 649-655.

Quiz 10: Due thursday 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Assignments")
Covers Module 6B and 7A readings

Forum Posts: Due tuesday and friday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Discussions")

Module Seven (B): Social Justice and Access to Health Care

Readings:

1. Ezekiel Emanuel, "The Problem with Single-Payer Plans", 686-690.

2. David DeGrazia, "Single Payer Meets Managed Competition: The Case for Public Funding and Private Delivery", 693-703.

Second Take Home Exam Overview

Quiz: None

Forum Posts: Due tuesday and friday at 10:00 p.m. (see Canvas, "Discussions")

Wednesday, December 13th: Second Take Home Exam Due at 10:00 p.m.

The second take home exam will be submitted online via Canvas under "Assignments". It will cover course content from Modules 4-7. Additional details are provided below, under "Course Requirements".

Note: While you may use your textbook while writing the exam, you may not work with other students, nor may you use any outside resources, including websites or secondary reading materials. The take home exam will be submitted through turnitin.com, plagiarism software, which will detect any passages within your exam that have been taken from other resources. Failure to adhere to rules of the assignment and to the academic honesty policy listed above will result in further investigation and penalties. All content from slides has also been uploaded to the turnitin.com database, and students are not permitted to copy content from slides in their answers. The best strategy to avoid plagiarizing material is to write the take home exam without the book open. That should prevent you from inadvertently copying too much from the language and explanation of the authors.

V. Course Requirements:

1. Course Readings/Materials: this text is required and must be purchased by the first day of class.

(a) 1. *Biomedical Ethics*, 7th Edition, Edited by Thomas A. Mappes and David DeGrazia (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2010)

1. Assignments, Assessment, and Evaluation

30% Reading and slides Quizzes, 10 worth 3% each

Due Thursdays at 10:00 p.m. on Canvas Assignments

Quizzes are designed to help students keep up with the progression of readings and to self-assess how well they understand the assigned essays on their own. There are no make-up quizzes and late submissions are not accepted. Answers to quiz questions are graded on a letter scale. Students may not use quotes from course materials or any website or secondary materials on the quizzes.

- D: almost entirely incorrect answer, more incorrect than correct
- C: mix of correct and incorrect answer, more correct than incorrect
- B: correct answer lacking (or only superficially including) a correct explanation
- B+: correct answer, includes correct explanation, doesn't successfully incorporate textual details
- A: correct answer, includes correct explanation, successfully incorporates useful details (but not quotes) from the texts

Feedback: Grades for quizzes will generally be released online one week after submission (with the exception of the quiz after the first take home exam, which could take longer to hand back). Feedback will be limited to letter grade scores for each question to enable this quick turnaround and frequency of quizzes over the course of the semester. I will also collect the best answers for each question and distribute them to students to help everyone find concrete ways to improve their understanding of course materials.

Online Forum and Participation

25% Due Tuesdays and Fridays at 10:00 p.m. on Canvas Discussions, 10 required weeks, 4 optional/extra credit weeks

Ethical questions readily spark debate and prompt us to evaluate our own views about deeply difficult, controversial, and personal beliefs and values. The class online discussion accompanying each topic provides students with an opportunity to raise questions about the texts and arguments advanced in the readings, to exchange and constructively challenge one another's positions, and to consider the merits of new or foreign views expressed by peers. Students are expected to actively engage in discussion with others using the online "Forum" feature on the Canvas site. The online forum will be divided into each of the 7 modules. Students are required to propose one question and answer about the texts, and one response to another student (as explained on pages 3-4 of the syllabus). Each week you will earn up to 2.5 points for your participation. Grades will be based on three factors:

- 1 point: your original question/answer post appear by Tuesdays at 10pm and your response to another person's post appears by Fridays at 10pm. You're responsible for reading through questions posted by other students and for not repeating the same question another student has already posted. You may not post questions/answers before we reach the accompanying module on the syllabus in order to get your posts out of the way early in the semester.
- 1 point: how helpful your posts are to improve the understanding of authors and positions assigned in the class, how much effort and thought you demonstrate in your posts. Posts that introduce a new author are especially valuable once a third of the class has already posted, especially if most people are concentrating on one author (or the first few pages of an essay).
- 1/2 point: how successful you are in prompting others to thoughtfully interact with your questions and comments. Posts that receive three or more thoughtful, reflective responses by other students in the class will earn the extra ½ point. Responses by other students that merely state agreement with you or repeat what you've said do not count. Responses that raise follow-up questions, counter-examples, suggest friendly amendments, or add extra evidence or examples to support what you've said are especially helpful and do count.
- optional/extra credit weeks: participation in forum discussions will be used to supplement participation grades for other weeks. Posts during optional weeks will be worth up to 1.5 points, distributed to other weeks where your participation did not max out the available points for that week, either because you missed posts, or because the quality of your other posts didn't earn full credit.

Feedback: While I will comment occasionally when I feel my presence would help clarify a point from the materials with which students continue to struggle, in general I will allow the forum to be student driven and will give you all the space to provide feedback to each other.

Two Take Home Exams, the first is worth 20% and the second is worth 25%

55%

Due dates on modules

There are *two* take home exams for the class. The first is worth 15% of the final class grade and covers Modules 1-3. Both are designed to prompt students to collect and organize what they've learned from the assigned readings and to draw comparisons across author positions, and to critically reflect on the extent to which they agree or disagree with core ethical arguments advanced by authors.

Feedback: Take home exams are graded using a point rubric. It takes considerably longer to grade the take home exams, but in general students should expect to have their grades released online between 1 and 2 weeks after they are submitted.

(a) **Late assignment policy:** All deadlines are listed on the course schedule and are firm. Late quizzes are not accepted. The take home exam may be submitted late, but for every 24 hours the assignment is late the grade will be subject to dropping 5% (from a B+ to a B, for instance). Late take home exams are only accepted provided that students submit for a grade extension form through the Registrar, which will result in an “IN” grade for the class until the work has been submitted. Students should make every effort to alert me in advance if a take-home exam will be late. Assignments will not be accepted more than six days after the deadline.

(b) **Critical dates for registration changes:** Please check with the [academic calendar \(Links to an external site.\)](#) to view last day to drop without penalty.

(c) **Course Grades and Symbols:** Please see the [Rutgers registrar’s website \(Links to an external site.\)](#) for an explanation of the grade codes and their numerical equivalents in terms of GPA.

Course grade (out of 100):

A (90 points or higher): outstanding;

B+ (85 points) or B (80 points): good;

C+ (75 points) or C (70 points): satisfactory;

D (60 points): poor;

F (fewer than 60 points): failing.

3. Use of *Canvas* in class

All class content and assignments will be processed through the platform *Canvas*—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://canvas.rutgers.edu> (Links to an external site.) -- to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, and to submit assignments. You will need to have a working Rutgers username and password before the start of the class, and will need to ensure that your registration status allows you to successfully login to the class Canvas site for the first day of class. [You can find support in using Canvas here. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

VI. Tutoring and Resources

Rutgers Learning Center

Free academic tutoring is available through the Rutgers Learning Center. For more information regarding subjects being tutored and scheduling appointments please see the [RLC website. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Rutgers Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs works to improve the quality of student life on and off campus, and is a very good resource if you are struggling with concerns that are wider than comprehension of the material in this class. This resource can help students find help for issues concerning new, transfer, or international student questions or problems, academic advising, health concerns, and can help you address stress management. For more information regarding their resources see the [Division of Student Affairs website \(Links to an external site.\)](#), or contact them at (856) 225-2825.

VII. Academic Integrity

Rutgers University Student Code of Conduct

Students are required to properly cite all materials, to only submit their own, individually produced work, and to adhere to the requirements of each assignment regarding the use of internet or print resources. Take home assignments must be submitted through the course Canvas site, which will check all assignments against the Turnitin.com database, an electronic plagiarism detection software program. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and strictly enforced, and can be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. Please review the University's [academic honesty policy and disciplinary procedures \(Links to an external site.\)](#), or speak with me if you have any questions.

VIII. Other University Notices and Policies

Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text

of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are [available here \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

Documented Disability Statement

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact the [Office of Disability Services \(Links to an external site.\)](#) for Students at (848) 445-6800 (voice) or dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu. Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from ODS. Please notify me as quickly as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible (e.g., instructional videos need captioning, handouts are not readable for proper alternative text conversion, etc.).

Audio-Visual Recording, Transmission, or Distribution

Students in this class are prohibited from recording and/or transmitting classroom slides, quizzes, and tests unless written permission from the class instructor has been obtained. Permission to allow the recording is not a transfer of any copyrights in the recording. The recording may not be reproduced or uploaded to publicly accessible web environments.

Recordings, course materials, and lecture notes may not be exchanged or distributed for commercial purposes, for compensation, or for any other purpose other than study by students enrolled in the class. Public distribution of such materials may constitute copyright infringement in violation of federal or state law, or University policy. Violation of this policy may subject a student to disciplinary action under the University's Standards of Conduct.

The policy aims to prohibit or limit recording of classroom lectures or re-distribution of classroom materials in order to:

- respect the integrity and effectiveness of the classroom experience;
- protect students and faculty dignity and privacy;
- respect faculty and University rights in instructional materials; and
- comply with copyright law.