

# **U.S. ACADEMIC EVALUATION SYSTEM**

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## OVERVIEW

FLTAs need to understand the system from different sides

- As an instructor
- As a student



## PLEASE NOTE

- This session will talk about the most frequent complaints/problems that students, professors and FLTAs have.
- However, please remember that the total number of complaints is still very small.



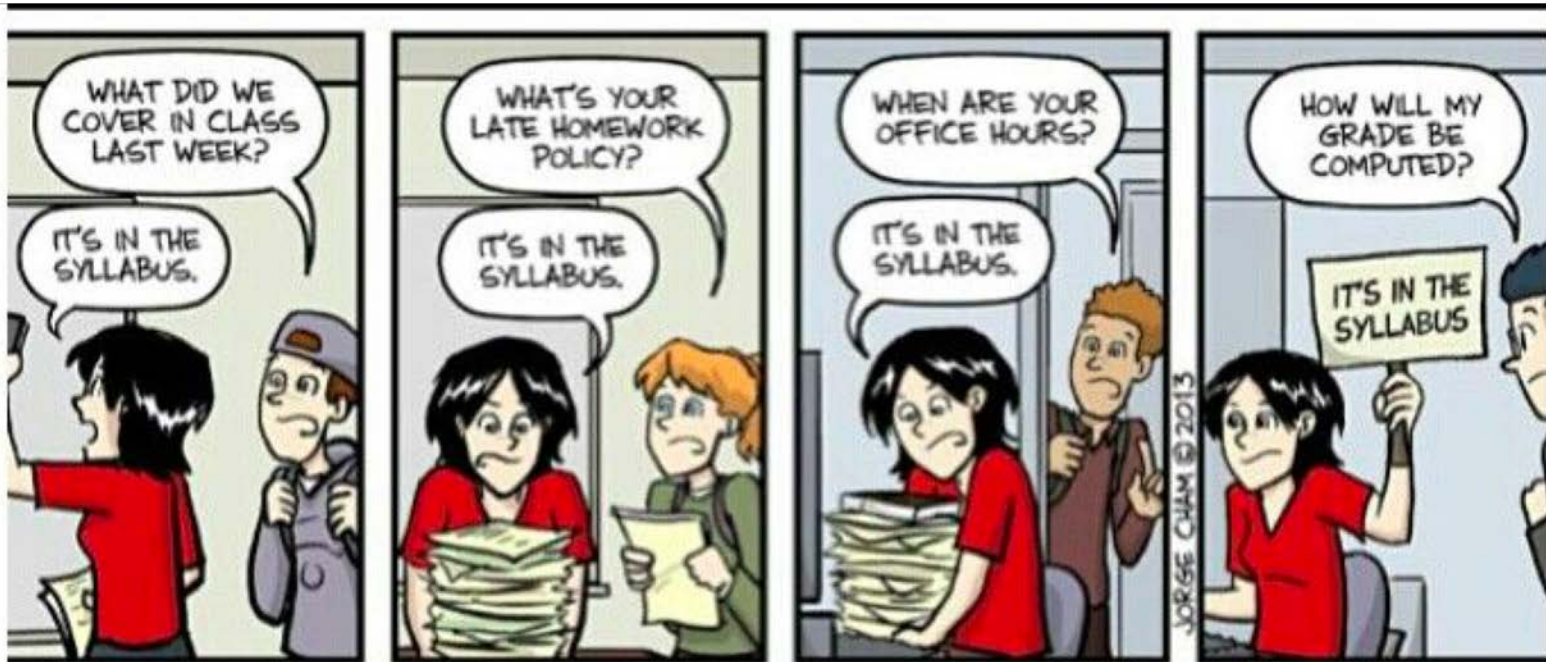
## Group Questions

What do you think are the 3 biggest complaints that language students have about their teachers and/or classes?

1. Grades/Evaluation
2. Grades/Evaluation
3. Grades/Evaluation



# IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS



**IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS**



# GRADING SCALES

- **Easy part to learn: (this can vary slightly)**


<b>Up to 100%</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>4.0</b>
			<b>3.5</b>
<b>min 80%</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>3.0</b>
			<b>2.5</b>
<b>min 70%</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>2.0</b>
			<b>1.5</b>
<b>min 60%</b>	<b>Poor, below average</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>&lt; 60%</b>	<b>Failing</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>0.0</b>



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			<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.25</b>
<b>min 80%</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.75</b>
			<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.25</b>
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# GRADING SCALES AND THE SYLLABUS

- Make sure your grading scale and criteria are written on the syllabus.
- You will need to have wording for how the final grade will be calculated.
- You do not have to have a rubric for each assignment
  - For “bigger” assignments, this is recommended
  - This may vary by institution, department, etc.





# AN EXAMPLE FROM OUR MSU FRENCH 101 SYLLABUS

Your final grade will be determined from the following components:

Pre-class activities on <i>iLrn</i>	30%
Homework (Saturday) activities on <i>iLrn</i>	15%
In-class written activities (10)	10% → the lowest two grades will be dropped
Chapter tests (5)	25%
<u>Can-Do Statements (4)</u>	<u>20%</u>
TOTAL	100%

## Grading Scale

<b>93 – 100</b>	<b>= 4.0</b>	<b>70 – 74.9</b>	<b>= 2.0</b>
<b>85 – 92.9</b>	<b>= 3.5</b>	<b>65 – 69.9</b>	<b>= 1.5</b>
<b>80 – 84.9</b>	<b>= 3.0</b>	<b>60 – 64.9</b>	<b>= 1.0</b>
<b>75 – 79.9</b>	<b>= 2.5</b>	<b>0 – 59.9</b>	<b>= 0.0</b>

Please note that grades will not be rounded up.

# CULTURAL DIFFERENCES: THE SYLLABUS AND GRADES

The syllabus is your contract with your students.

- In the US, students have a right to know how they will be graded.
- Students have a right to challenge grades, and they do.
- The terms *quiz*, *test*, *exam*, *project*, *participation*, etc. are all culturally variable! Make sure everything is clearly defined.



# ADDRESSING STUDENT COMPLAINTS

- Use your syllabus!
- Check with your teaching supervisor right away. You may be given:
  - A complete, day-by-day syllabus
  - A partial syllabus that you will have to complete with details
  - Only guidelines for what should be in your syllabus



# In class written assessments (this will vary)


## ○ **Quiz:**

- short in length (1/4 page to no more than 1 page),
- short in time (5-15 mins),
- usually only 1 or two skills/topics,
- sometimes announced, sometimes unannounced

## ○ **Test:**

- longer in length— several pages and time (45mins-70mins),
- more than one skill and/or topic,
- US students expect these to be scheduled at the beginning of the semester

## ○ **Exam:**

- long, 1-2 hrs,
  - cumulative (testing everything up to that point), multiple skills and topics,
  - ALWAYS announced and planned. Usually 1 mid-term exam and 1 final exam.
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# ADDRESSING STUDENT COMPLAINTS

## Cultural differences, cont...

- Students expect timely return of grades and/or feedback.
- Most universities require instructors to have office hours and be available to students who need extra help or who have questions.
- US law (**FERPA**) requires grades be confidential between the student and teacher/supervisor.
  - no ranking or sharing academic progress with others



# FERPA AND HIPAA

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
  - [www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html)
  - Also: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov>
  - Privacy/Confidentiality exception: mandatory reporting rules
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
  - [www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/)



## WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...

- a parent calls and wants to discuss their child's grades with you.
- students email about quiz grades.

## OTHER QUESTIONS:

- How do you pass back assignments?
- Can you give a prize for the highest grade?
- Should you announce grades as you pass assignments back?



# ADDRESSING STUDENT COMPLAINTS

## ● FAIRNESS

- Tell the students how you will grade them
- Grade students the way you say you will grade them
- Grade all students the same way
  - except in extenuating circumstances, if you extend a deadline for one, you must extend the deadline for all
  - if you offer extra credit to one, you must offer it to all
  - Exceptions: Students with documented disabilities can get some special arrangement.





# STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)
  - Schools must afford students with disabilities with equal opportunities "to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of achievement" as students without disabilities.
  - Section 504 applies only to entities that receive federal funds.



## STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

- At MSU: **R**esource **C**enter for **P**eople with **D**isabilities (RCPD)
  - **VISA** (Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations)
  - **VISTA** (Temporary)
- Your institution should have a similar department



# STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

- Accommodations may include:
  - Extended test time / private testing area
  - Preferential seating
  - Allowed to record classes
  - Allowed to be late/leave early
  - Having a reader (for deaf/blind students)



# PROFESSORS

- Group question:

What do you think are the 3 biggest complaints that professors have about the FLTAs in their academic courses?



# TOP PROFESSOR COMPLAINTS, REVERSE ORDER

- Participation
- Group Work Issues
- Plagiarism
  - Claiming someone else's work as your own
  - Can be...
    - Not attributing / citing other's work
    - Direct copying



# CONSEQUENCES OF PLAGIARISM

- Failing the assignment
- Failing the course
- Being dismissed from the FLTA program



# AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

- Learn the rules of what constitutes plagiarism
- Err on the side of caution! (It's better to have too many citations than accidentally plagiarize.)
- Great resource: Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>



## GROUP QUESTION

What do you think are the biggest challenges FLTAs have adjusting to the US Academic Evaluation system?

What challenges do you think you may have??





# NOTES BEFORE CONTINUING

- Audit vs credit
  - Audit means you don't get a grade or academic credit for the class; however, as an FLTA you are required to actively participate in the course.
- It's about 50/50 for the FLTAs across the country: about 50% audit courses and 50% take them for credit (determined by each host institution).
- By about October, almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  of you will wish you had the other option no matter which one you have. (The grass is always greener on the other side. 😊)



- Remember, taking courses is a requirement of the FLTA program, so failure to actively participate in class can have serious repercussions:
  - Failure to earn your Fulbright FLTA completion certificate
  - Possible termination of your terms of award (and therefore, departure from the program)




# TOP CHALLENGES FOR FLTAS

- For those who are AUDITING classes
  - Staying motivated
  
- For those who are taking a class for CREDIT
  - Handling the pressure of getting a grade



# TOP CHALLENGES FOR FLTAS

- For all FLTAs:
    - Participating fully in class
    - Understanding the course and professor's expectations
    - A course not being what they thought it was
    - A course being harder or easier than expected
    - Scheduling conflicts, prerequisites limiting course options
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# ADDRESSING FLTA CHALLENGES

- Work with your supervisor or advisor to select the best courses for you. Or ask other graduate students in your department which courses they recommend.
- **Read the syllabi** for your courses and understand the requirements.
- Talk to your professors regularly to check in and confirm you're on track.
- If necessary, find out the rules about dropping a course.



# FINAL TIPS TO MINIMIZE ALL OF THESE CHALLENGES

- Maintain clear, specific, frequent communication
  - Supervisors
  - Students
  - Professors
- Keep detailed records (CYA)
- Learn as much as you can about expectations
- Be Proactive, not Reactive.
- Be flexible: Be willing to acknowledge a problem and adjust as needed
- Keeping a sense of humor can greatly help!



THANK YOU !

ANY QUESTIONS ?

