

**Montclair State University Department of Classics and General Humanities**  
**Shortened Guidelines for General Humanities I (GNHU 201) Version Nov. 2007**

**Introduction.**

This set of guidelines has been created for faculty instructors — particularly those who are new to Montclair State and to the Department of Classics and General Humanities— as an overview of the course General Humanities I in terms of goals, content, procedures, resources, evaluation and other relevant items. Although we provide considerable latitude with respect to how individual faculty design their syllabi, there are standards. This document contains departmental recommendations concerning the conduct of the class, course-content, assessments, and academic standards within the course. This document presents the general views and practices of the Department, yet also suggests one vision of what we aim for as instructors in the Humanities.

**Conduct of the Course:**

Good practice university-wide at MSU acknowledges the following responsibilities on the part of instructors toward students. These are to:

1. conduct the class in such a way that an atmosphere of mutual toleration, respect, and politeness prevails, conducive to academic discourse
2. present a course that challenges students to learn and do their best work
3. develop instruments of evaluation (including regular homework) sufficiently refined to give a true assessment of each student's performance and of the differences in performance among members of the class
4. provide each student with a typed syllabus on the first day of class that spells out clearly
  - a. the objective(s) of the course
  - b. required textbooks
  - c. daily reading assignments
  - d. the dates of all exams and holidays
  - e. method of evaluation (giving the precise percentage of total grade carried by each evaluation instrument)
  - f. policies concerning attendance, submission of late homework, making-up of quizzes and exams, extra credit, plagiarism
  - g. instructor's phone number, email address, web page, etc. office number, office hours

- h. other resources or locales where students can find assistance.
  - i. an address where students can get information about classes cancelled due to inclement weather or other matters. The weather hotline number is (973) 655-7810.
5. clearly inform students of current homework assignments (these can be posted on a website for the course available through Blackboard)
  6. maintain proper pacing of assignments so as to avoid piling on material at the end, when students are most pressured.
  7. keep a written record of each student's grades
  8. grade and return students' work in a timely manner and regularly enough for students to know where they stand in the class throughout the semester
  9. hold three office-hours per week (this is university-wide policy for full-time faculty) and 45 minutes' office hours per course taught by adjuncts
  10. start class punctually and finish it at the specified time
  11. ensure that, if you intend to cancel a class, or intend to meet a class in another location, or find you cannot make it to class, that you leave information with the Department so we can inform students of what has happened — and know ourselves
  12. encourage students to help each other in the course, for example, through exchanging email addresses or telephone numbers, or forming study groups.

Concomitantly, in this course, as in all courses, students can be expected and asked to

1. arrive punctually at the beginning of class
2. stay for the duration of the class and not disrupt it by leaving early
3. have prepared the class assignment
4. listen attentively to the instructor
5. treat the instructor and fellow-students respectfully and politely. Instructors should feel comfortable about setting their own guidelines about walking in late, eating, using laptops or tape recorders to take notes, having conversations, turning off cell phones, etc.
6. submit assigned work on time (see below under "Evaluation")
7. do not cheat or plagiarize, nor tolerate those who do
8. attend all classes (for attendance policy see below under "Evaluation")
9. make sure that the demands of work, family, social life, etc. allow them adequate time to take the class
10. use the monclair.edu email account (no matter what other accounts they use for personal business) for all class business

## Students with Special Needs

Instructors should be aware that some students come with special needs, including problems such as dyslexia that can impede their learning. Those who have been designated as special needs students by the university will come to you with information sheets supplied by the office of Linda Smith, Director of Services for Students with Disabilities, Morehead Hall 118, 973-655-5308. These sheets detail the needs these students have for special accommodations, for instance that they be permitted to tape lectures, or be given extra time for examinations or, in some cases, be allowed alternate assignments. Students who seems to have special needs but are not yet working with Linda Smith's office should be referred to her, with a follow-up.

## Students Having Difficulties with College-Level Work

MSU prides itself as having a diverse student body and in providing access to a college education to all levels of society. Leading a general trend in the USA, over seventy percent of high school graduate students in New Jersey go on and take some college courses. However, due to the problems existing many of our high schools, many of our students come to MSU lacking skills to prepare them for college work. The Center for Academic Development and Assessment (Morehead Hall, 140) administers a series of placement tests for writing, reading and math, and many students, on the basis of the scores of these tests, are required to take remedial courses in these subjects. These tests and the two-course English Composition course sequence should help diminish some of these problems, but transfer students who already have a two-year degree can bypass this process. The Center for Academic Development and Assessment also provides free tutoring services<sup>1</sup> for various major courses (although none which our Department offers) plus more general tutoring on college skills. There is also a writing center in Dickson 285, managed by the English Department<sup>2</sup>. Students can drop in for help, or a professor can even require that a student go to the Writing Center and for feedback to be given to the instructor. This is the preferred place to send students who have trouble with writing.

It is not uncommon to find students whose grasp of English is not up to reading the more difficult texts we assign and writing about them. Such students often do not recognize the severity of the problem; if possible, an instructor should let such a student know as early as

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.montclair.edu/cada/>

<sup>2</sup> (973) 655-7442 or [http://english.montclair.edu/Programs2/FirstYear/Writing\\_center.htm](http://english.montclair.edu/Programs2/FirstYear/Writing_center.htm)

possible that radical improvement is required to pass the course. This is one argument for giving appropriate writing assignments early in the course, in order to identify such students. The University is still in the process of developing a more robust method of dealing with students who have problems with reading English. The University has ESL courses, and sometimes students have taken these at MSU or at other institutions. Students with problems reading and writing English should take these courses. Nevertheless, even some of these students still have problems. The University also offers advanced ESL courses, which may be an option.

### A Few More Comments About At-Risk Students. .

There are a substantial number of ‘at-risk’ students at MSU, far more than there exist programs and official resources adequate to deal with them. Sometime, often well into the middle of the semester, the Center for Academic Development and Assessment sends out to each instructor a form to check the academic performance of at-risk students and students in athletics and other special programs. Do fill out and turn in these forms, but do not put great hopes that proper action will be taken. It is one of the agonizing questions each of us who teach must face – how much time, effort and heart can we give to students who are failing. This is one reason that each of us must, from the first minute of the course, be very clear about the sort of work that must be done in order to succeed in our classes and WHY that work is reasonable. There are, of course, always a fair fraction of students who, due to various circumstances, cannot be motivated or made to perform properly. But we should try to look out (and this is hard) for those students who can do better, but are so overwhelmed, inexperienced, misinformed etc. that they heading to failure. Many of these can be helped - -but it requires us to be aware, and to take the time.

### **Content of the Course**

Every individual has his or her own teaching style. However the department recommends that this course should be conducted in the classroom through a mixture of lecture (supported when appropriate by audio-visual aids), group discussion, and individual participation (question and answer, presentations to the class) and out of class work, such as homework assignments and papers.

### Scope and Material.

The basic aim of this course is to acquaint the student with the important themes and topics of the (basically Western) Humanities beginning with the Paleolithic (which is only briefly dealt with), and the early civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia to the end of the High Middle Ages around 1400 C. E. This should as well include Byzantium and the rise of Islam and

its religion, social culture and arts. The course's two overarching goals are to (1) acquaint students with the central accomplishments of the cultures studied; (2) give students an understanding of how these cultures laid the foundations — for good and ill — of the modern era that begins with the Renaissance. This course is a challenging one due to its considerable potential depth and breadth. The ideal (and it is an *ideal*) is to teach the traditional topics in the Humanities (art, literature, music, architecture, philosophy, history, theology, et. al.) in a manner which situates them in the context of great historical trends (the march of technology, the growing appreciation for individualism etc.), local history (Athens, Rome, Jerusalem), their interdependence (connections between drama and philosophy, painting and rhetoric for example), and their links to more recent developments (*e.g.* current debates about 'natural law').

This course fulfills the "General Humanities" component of MSU's General Education Requirements, the 'core' requirements required of all student who obtain a B.A. degree. These General Education courses are supposed to lay the foundations for further education as they create certain breath of foundational knowledge. Such courses should encourage critical thinking and expression as well. General Humanities I is potentially one of the finest of General Education courses precisely because it can provide students a real synthesis of a wide variety of topics and methods of understanding those topics. It is most desirable not to make the course mainly a literature course, a history course, an art course etc., but to weave all these topics together. For each of the major epochs studied (Prehistory, the first civilizations of North Africa and the Middle East, the Greeks, the Romans, Late Antiquity and the Dark Ages and the High Middle Ages) students should come away with at least an understanding of the outlines of their history, the salient features of the cultures involved, the most important contributions in painting, sculpture, technology, architecture, politics, literature, and philosophy. And, again, these should not be presented as disconnected phenomena, but as items connected to each other and to what has gone before and what will come after. This emphasis is not only important for scholarly reasons, but for quite substantial social ones. All of us, students and teachers alike, participate in culture both as receptors and creators. A solid understanding of how history and culture come about as human productions is a valuable corrective to tendencies to believe the world we live in is simply an inexplicable given and to undervalue the power of individuals to rethink and change their world.

Instructors in this course should also, early on, provide some discussion on how problematic notions of the 'Humanities' and 'culture' really are. Are the 'Humanities' to be identified with 'High Culture?' How are notions of the humanities bound up with various social and political ideologies, a phenomenon evident in the era of Socrates as well as of Matthew Arnold? There are different definitions of 'culture' too, from the purely anthropological to the firmly elitist. Students should be made aware of how the struggle over definitions of 'culture' and the 'humanities,' carried on today, is of great relevance to their own lives.

This brings us to another point. Students will often wonder what is the use of taking a course in the Humanities. Instructors should directly confront this issue, and stress the practical benefits of courses in the Humanities (ability to synthesize information, understand and express ideas, write etc. ) as well as the more philosophic ones. In every section there are several students seeking a major and instructors are strongly encouraged to spend some time making students aware of the existence of this major. The first common reading, the introduction to the study of the humanities, engages many of these issues.

General Humanities I and the General Humanities Major.

Not only does General Humanities I fulfill the General Humanities requirement of Montclair State University’s General Education requirement, it is also one of the three central courses for our Department’s General Humanities Major. Here is chart with the basic details. Go to our Departmental webpage<sup>3</sup> for a full listing of course electives.

34 semester hours (s.h.) for Major after approx. 58 s.h. General Education requirements		
<b>Three Required Major Courses (10 s.h.)</b>		
(1) General Humanities I	(2) General Humanities II	(3) Senior Humanities Seminar
<b>Major Electives – 34 s.h.</b>		
2 History courses from 2 of 3 periods	(1) Early Western (2) Later Western (3)Non-Western	
One course Philosophy	One course Religious Studies	
One course Comparative Literature	One course National Literature	
One course Art History	One course Music History	
<b>Plus enough general elective courses to total 120 s.h. for B.A.</b>		

The major electives are drawn from lists of courses which fulfill each category. As noted, we maintain on our website a list of these courses. In the departmental office there are also handouts describing our Department’s various majors and providing a list of approved electives. Also, many times transfer students have courses which we are able to give credit for as fulfilling one of the major requirements. We encourage all instructors to familiarize themselves with the General Humanities Major and to make students aware, especially students who have yet to declare a major, of this major. At this moment there are 130+ majors in General Humanities at Montclair State University. We would like to significantly increase this number, and we believe we can.

Assessment of the Goals of the Major

As part of the accrediting process for MSU and for our Department, we have been asked to come up with a set of goals for the major / We are expected to create instruments to assess if these

goals have been reached and to carry out this assessment. When our General Humanities Majors graduate they should have....

- 1 Knowledge of broad outlines of Western Cultural history, a goal fulfilled by passing Gen. Hum I & II )
- 2 A broad knowledge of various topics in the Humanities, a goal fulfilled by taking a broad selection of different sorts of humanities courses, as our Major and the Gen. Ed requirement demands.
- 3 An understanding of how the humanities relate to contemporary events and culture. We would require some common writing assignment/project in all the sections of General Humanities II and would collect papers in order to see if this was being fulfilled.
4. Ability to think and write about topics in the humanities, a goal particularly fulfilled by the major writing project of the Senior Seminar, which is a capstone course.

We encourage all instructors to keep these goals in mind as they construct and teach their courses.

#### Required course readings.

As noted above, our Department allows much freedom for instructors to conduct courses as they wish. This is good, for we believe instructors should be able to mold a course to some extent to fit their strengths. But, in part due to increased interest by administrators on creating clearly defined goals for majors and our own desire to make our General Humanities Major more substantial and thus more attractive, we have begun to create a list of common readings, which are now covered in all sections.

At this moment, all sections of General Humanities I & II are required to cover a twelve-page introduction to General Humanities, which members of our Department have written and are revising from year to year. This essay helps students explore more fully what exactly ARE the Humanities, what subjects are covered by the Humanities, and provides a brief survey of how the study and cultivation of the Humanities evolved, why the study of the humanities is thought to be useful, the social and ideological dimension of present notions of the humanities, and some challenges to the study of the humanities. There is also a brief outline of the major time divisions and a survey of how classic works of the humanities have come down to our time.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://chss2.montclair.edu/classics/Homepage/hummajor.html>

Some instructors do this entire handout during the first classes, others address different parts of it at different times in the semester.

In addition, for General Humanities I there is a required sixty-four page booklet *Humanities and the Classical Tradition: Use, Influence, Transmission and Critics* (Pearson Custom Publishing). This booklet includes the initial essay and other readings which emphasize the Classical tradition, one of the unifying themes of our major's core courses. It includes selections from Plato's *Republic*, Book II, Plutarch's *Life of Cato the Elder*, Cicero's *Pro Archias*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, Quintilian's *On the Education of an Orator*, Longinus' *On the Sublime* among other texts. We expect all instructors to cover this material, readings which can be substituted for other readings in the reader if necessary.

Also, for General Humanities I we require all sections to read Euripides' *Hippolytos*, and require all sections of General Humanities II to read Racine's *Phaedre*. The ideal, of course, is for those majors who have taken General Humanities I and read the *Hippolytos* to have a greater appreciation of Racine's *Phaedra*. We would like to have more coordinated assignments like these. Going over syllabi, we have found that there is a definable selection of authors nearly all instructors have used without being required to. In time, we hope to formalize this list, and make it part of the required 'core' readings.

#### Further comments on written texts.

Although the task discussed above seems daunting, there are, luckily, a number of texts available which do a fair job of covering the history of these periods and a wide variety of their cultural productions. While finding the ideal text is an ongoing struggle, currently, the most commonly used texts in our department are Matthews and Platt's *The Western Humanities*, Vol. I (Mayfield) along with *Readings in the Western Humanities* Vol. I (Mayfield). These texts handle their impossible tasks fairly well, and the instructor who covers the full range of material in these textbooks will give students a quite substantial grounding in the topics discussed above. These text cover a wide range of material by providing numerous short selections, and thus one shortcoming is that students do not read complete works of considerable length. Thus these two basic texts are frequently supplemented by one or more other texts, such as the *Hippolytos* and *Phaedre*, plus the handout of readings. Some instructors have their students buy additional books or have their students read texts posted on Blackboard or photocopied.

## Visual and aural "texts"

Given the important contributions made by these cultures in painting, sculpture, architecture and other arts, it is recommended that instructors make visual materials an important component of the course. The Department owns a large collection of slides of ancient sites and images pertaining to Greco-Roman and Near Eastern art and archaeology and other relevant topics. The Department of Art and Design in Calcia Hall also has a large collection of slides particularly of Western art and many of these have been digitized. Indeed, digital projectors are increasingly replacing slide projectors. Our Department has two digital projectors, more can be borrowed from Instructional Technology, and many classrooms at MSU are now 'smart; with built-in digital projectors. The Multimedia Resources Department in the basement of Sprague library has substantial collections of CDs, videocassettes, audiocassettes, phonograph records, filmstrips and slides many of which can be checked out. They are always looking for suggestions of works to add to their collection.

At this moment, most of the instructors who teach this course come out of backgrounds which stress literature, religions or philosophy, not art and archaeology. We believe that an appreciation of art and archaeology is an essential dimension of the humanities and indeed provides a valuable referent to the literary text. To improve the teaching of these subjects, we are creating on-line slideshows and exercises on these topics. Students, through Blackboard, the learning management system used by MSU, are able to view slide shows on these topics and take exercises, which Blackboard will administer, grade and record the grades. For more information, contact Dr. Jean Altars ([alvaresj@mail.montclair.edu](mailto:alvaresj@mail.montclair.edu)).

## **Evaluation**

The best and most accurate type of evaluation will be made up of a variety of different components that test students' abilities in a variety of different ways e.g. writing papers, answering objective questions, making presentations, participating in class discussion *etc.* The methods by which the students' performance is to be evaluated should be clearly spelled out on the syllabus and should state what each component of the course (participation, quizzes, mid-terms, final, term paper etc) is worth in terms of a percentage of the total grade.

A student's grade should not be wholly or partially dependent on group-work with other students since assigning a global grade to a joint endeavor is rarely a fair or accurate way of assessing the contribution of a single individual.

Also, courses at MSU are increasingly 'blended', that is, use both traditional and online venues. This trend will only continue, and we believe that technology can, when used correctly, significantly improve teaching. However, one of the problems of online work involves cheating.

If the instructor intends to make on-line work an very significant part of the student's grade, online assignments must be created to minimize the potential for cheating. This can be done through, for example, creating timed exercises, requiring essays, using randomized question banks.

### Written assignments

The rubrics for General Education Courses require that students write a minimum of 2000 words for the course as part of formal, edited writing assignments. Given the inexperience of many students in writing long papers, including the tendency of a number to unintentionally or intentionally plagiarize, we strongly suggest that the writing assignments in the course consist of several short essays (2-4 pages) beginning early in the term. If a longer paper-especially one involving library research — is to be assigned, the instructor should supervise the writing of it in an organized manner by looking at first drafts, requiring rewrites, or the like.

Here are some examples

A. **Comparison of theme, motif or other element.** Student is to compare a theme or topic in several works, ones carefully selected to reduce potential plagiarism. For example, the theme of divine vengeance in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in *Genesis*, Hesiod's *Works and Days*, and in Dante's *Inferno*.

B. **An exercise in synthesis.** The student is to link together more disparate materials, for example, examining attitudes toward women as seen in A. the Parthenon sculptures B. the *Oresteia* and C. Lysias' *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*.

C. **Reaction/argument paper.** The student would carefully read, let us say, Aristophanes *Wasps*, and carefully discuss the main issues and events of the play as they see them. Care must be taken to require students to seriously think about the work, not just record their superficial reactions. Or a student could be presented with selections from Aristotle's *Politics* (let us say on slavery and the subordination of women) and asked to create arguments against Aristotle's views, after first explaining Aristotle's arguments.

D. **Exercise in close analysis.** A work will be assigned (such as the sculptures of Augustus' Altar of Peace) and students are asked to analyze it in terms of art (for example, how 'realistic' or 'ideal' are the sculptures), ideology (what Augustus is trying to say through this artwork) and how this relates to its historical moment (the evolution of the Principate).

### E. **More Suggestions.**

Any writing assignments should be described clearly in writing. Such assignments should make the writing goals very clear and specify the scope of the paper (exactly what the student is required to research or discuss), length (approximate number of words, minimum and/or

maximum), presentation, required style of documentation, plagiarism policy etc. It is usually a good idea to spend at least some time of one class reviewing with students some basic aspects of good writing (such as the construction of a thesis, its presentation in an introductory paragraph, its development in the body of the paper, concluding paragraph) and what constitutes plagiarism.

Plagiarism, with the advent of the internet, is a very serious problem. Beyond making sure students know what plagiarism is (and many really do not), two good ways of reducing it are to (a) not allow students to select their own paper topics, but to carefully create original ones for the student; (b) for longer papers, making the writing of a paper a multi-stage process, with outlines, abstracts, bibliography and drafts having to be turned in at various points in the process. It is also a very good idea to change writing assignments from semester to semester to prevent students from passing their papers down to their friends.

Some professors hand out a separate sheet of general guidelines for writing papers or provide their students a checklist of items to be considered while writing and revising. Presenting students with very specific oral and written instructions for written assignments (as, indeed, for any assignment) allows for the possibility of more rigorous evaluation of the finished product. Similarly, specifying clearly what constitutes plagiarism justifies rigorous handling of plagiarism. It can also be a good idea to spend at least one class on collective brain-storming in preparation for the writing of a paper. Written work should be returned to the student with the instructor's detailed comments and allowing, or encouraging, re-writes is often good policy.

Several instructors have students keep together all their writing assignments to create a portfolio, which charts their progress in writing and which are turned in at the end of the semester as one more component to the grade. Such a portfolio allows students to see their progress as well as aids the instructor in making final evaluations.

Another sort of assignment that the Department encourages involves requiring students to go to a museum, archaeological site or cultural event (e.g. a production of a medieval mystery play) and produce proof of attendance and complete some sort of writing assignment, such as comparison of select Greek and Roman statues. The assignment should be designed with great flexibility, so that students with family and work obligations are not unduly burdened.

### Homework

While this is left to the discretion of the instructor, it is felt that students should be assigned homework on a regular basis. It is reasonable to assign students some homework in preparation for every class, whether in the form of reading (up to, say, 70 pages per week), writing, or reviewing. Short quizzes can be used as a method of enforcing reading requirements. Some instructors also use 'prereading' assignments, short homeworks which cover the material

which will be gone over at the beginning of a period, which must be turned in at the very beginning of that period, a practice which will encourage better student preparation. Further, in universities and colleges across the USA WebCT and Blackboard are providing environments where students can do homeworks and review work and a wide variety of learning activities.

Quizzes and examinations

It is appropriate to give at least two full-scale in-class (not take-home or open-book) examinations during the course including the final examination. For classes that meet only once a week, however, a midterm and a final is probably all that can be expected. Although the university does not require that a final exam be given in a course, the departmental preference is to do so. A final exam might typically consist of some essay questions, some short answer questions, possibly some multiple choice questions, and some activity such as identification artworks, sites, buildings etc. via slides.

Note that both university and departmental regulations require that a final must be given in the scheduled two-hour final examination period during examination week—for the schedule — see the opening material in the Course Schedule Book — and not during the last week of classes. The final examination must be held at the officially scheduled time in order not to create conflicts with finals in other courses

Some faculty prefer to replace the midterm with two hour-long exams spaced approximately one-third and two-thirds of the way through the semester. Some faculty also give daily short quizzes as a way of encouraging students to keep up with the reading assignments or with mastery of material (names, dates, places, cultural terms, and concepts) presented in class.

With respect to test formats and types of questions, the practice in the department is that most midterm, final, or hour-examinations in courses of this kind include substantial essay questions Typically such exams also include a mixture of more detailed, objective-oriented questions Brief quizzes, of course, lend themselves better to objective question

Grading

While the University maintains a 4.0 grade scale, wh. score actually constitutes an ‘A’, ‘B’ etc. is up to the discretion of the instructor, this chart gives a commonly adopted grade scale. There is considerable concern about grade inflation, and consequently in most classes of this type one should be wary of giving a very large number of A's (for

100-93	A	76-73	C
92-90	A-	72-70	C-
89-87	B+	69-67	D
86-83	B	66-63	D
82-80	B-	62-60	D-
79-77	C+	59-0	F

example, A or A- to over one-third of the students). A large number of one type of grade may be a sign that the methods of evaluation in place are not sufficiently rigorous to reveal disparities between students. A typical spread of grades in a class of 30 could be 10 A-range grades, 12 B-range grades, 4 C-range grades, 2 D-range grades, 2 F grades, although obviously classes vary in terms of student performance and ability and this is just an example.

A grade of IN (Incomplete) should be assigned only if the student can show good reason why he or she was prevented by illness or other unavoidable problems from finishing the work of the course on time. Incomplete grades must be accompanied by a "Contract for an Incomplete Grade" form submitted with the grade sheet. When work is finally completed a "Student Grade Change" form must be submitted to the chair and thence to the dean and registrar. NOT ANY MORE

But even more important than the question of too many students getting an 'A' is the question of what these have actually learned and produced. While we do not want our courses to be thought to be comparatively difficult, we do not want to offer courses that are widely thought to be 'gut' courses in which little reading, study or work has to be done. As pointed out above, we wish our courses to be challenging.

Plagiarism (see the opening material in the undergraduate catalogue) is grounds for an F on the particular assignment or in the course as a whole. The same holds for cheating on a quiz or exam. Some professors follow the practice of asking students to sign a plagiarism pledge on the first day of classes which states that plagiarism will be grounds for an F in the course. It is helpful at this point to clearly explain, both orally and in writing, what plagiarism is.

### Attendance

The undergraduate catalogue states that faculty may promulgate an attendance policy and enforce it, although this too is a matter of the instructors' discretion. It would be reasonable, for example, to make the policy that the overall course grade will be reduced by one point for every absence over four (in a course that meets twice a week) but that absences will be considered "excused" if a note is provided from a physician or the Dean of Student Affairs. If an attendance policy is in effect the instructor should keep meticulous records of attendance and state the terms of the policy in writing on the syllabus. Some faculty prefer to make attendance the responsibility of students alone, not keeping attendance records as such but in effect monitoring and rewarding attendance by means of daily quizzes or in-class writing assignments

## Blackboard Learning Management System

Montclair State University has purchased a full-fledged version of the Blackboard course management system, including the Blackboard Content system. This system is linked to the databases maintained by the registrar. As a result, all courses offered at Montclair State have given a Blackboard site, whether instructors choose to use Blackboard or not. Once an instructor has completed the necessary paperwork, the instructor can obtain a MSU email account and the Net ID and password which will allow them to use both email and to access their Blackboard courses. Blackboard creates a web portal, with various segments. The instructor can post messages, course materials to download, slides for review, slide shows (including Power Point shows), text files and much else. Blackboard also allows the instructor to create mailing lists, and threaded discussion groups. Through Blackboard instructors can create on-line exercises and surveys. Many instructors now use Blackboard at differing levels of sophistication, and we now can expect ALL students to be able to use it. Indeed, students now expect it. It is rare now to find a student with NO computer expertise, and in fact most now have computers. Plus there are many computer labs on campus. For instructors who do not know how to use Blackboard, the Office of Information Technology runs training sessions for using Blackboard. Plus your Coordinator and fellow instructors are usually glad to help. Blackboard is really easy to get started on. Because Blackboard is a web-based system, it can be accessed through any reasonably up-to-date internet browser.

There are also many other technological resources available, some fairly exotic. For a sense of what Montclair offers, visit the office of Information Technology<sup>4</sup>.

## **Evaluation of teaching**

### (a) Faculty in-class observations

University and department regulations require that adjunct or other part-time faculty, be observed in class at least once per semester by a full-time tenured faculty member. Full-time faculty who are untenured must be observed twice per academic year. Each classroom observation should be preceded by a conference between observer and the observed in which the nature and objectives of the upcoming class, together with how it fits into the course as a whole, should be discussed. The observation should be followed by a conference soon afterwards in which both faculty members attempt to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the class session and how it might be improved.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://oit.montclair.edu/>

(b) Student evaluation questionnaires

All adjunct, part-time, and full-time untenured faculty should have each class they teach evaluated by this means each semester. The department secretary has sample copies of the evaluation form for perusal and in approximately the twelfth week of the term will provide each faculty member needing evaluation with a packet of evaluation sheets together with instructions on how to hand out the sheets to the students and arrange for them to be filled out anonymously as well as delivered back to the department office by a student. Both the quantitative results of the multiple-choice evaluation questions and the written evaluative comments of students will be provided to the faculty member within one month of the date on which the evaluations were administered to the class.

**Other important information.**

Once you are hired by MSU, various types of paperwork must be filled out. Information concerning this other matters (such as ordering books, getting office space, copy cards, etc.) will be provided by the Departmental secretary, the Humanities Coordinator or Chair.