

Guidelines

What Might Graduate Students Be Asked to Do in 300-level Courses?

Though our department recognizes its graduate program as a strength, we nonetheless focus the greater portion of our department's resources upon our undergraduate programs. As a result, the department can offer a limited number of graduate courses (400 level) to our graduate students. Partly as a result, we encourage our graduate students to take courses in other, related disciplines and at other universities and we also encourage students to enroll in our 300-level courses.

By opening our 300-level courses to our graduate students, we not only effectively increase the number of courses that are available to graduate students but by doing so offer these students the opportunity to tackle subjects that simply are not otherwise addressed in graduate level courses. This approach has not only relieved pressure at the 400-level but has worked to the benefit of our graduate students.

The approach, however, has also posed a particular challenge to faculty—

Our 300-level courses are designed to meet the needs of the upper division undergraduate and they are not consequently designed to challenge the typical graduate student. To be sure, a 300-level course can and often do challenge both undergraduate and graduate students but perhaps our expectations as faculty for what a graduate student should accomplish in such courses should differ from what we would expect from an undergraduate.

What, in fact, should our expectations be for graduate students taking a 300-level course?

Different faculty have taken different approaches in determining what graduate students taking their 300-level classes should accomplish, with expectations ranging from requiring little or nothing more from graduate students to requiring substantially more work. While it will remain the faculty's prerogative regarding what requirements are made the following suggestions are offered simply to assist the faculty in deciding what might be expected.

Suggestions—

Graduate students should, of course, introduce themselves the first day of class to the professor, though faculty may wish in advance to review their registration list to see whether graduate students have enrolled in their course. In either case, the professor should be prepared to tell the graduate student, preferably in writing, what he or she should expect to do in the course that might be in addition to what is expected of undergraduates.

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Typically, faculty have required graduate students to do extra reading or research and writing, often in some combination.

Readings

Required readings could be increased by two or three or more texts or several articles in addition to whatever has been assigned for the course. The readings could be selected by the professor or each student might be required as part of a broader effort to become familiar with literature in a field to identify readings for approval.

Written Assignments

In addition to such readings, the graduate students could be required to—

- Prepare a critique on each addition text or
- Submit a comparative critique on the readings
- or the student could be asked to prepare a historiographic essay covering all course readings.

An alternative would be to require a graduate student to write a longer and more research-intensive paper that would be the equivalent of what graduate students are expected to prepare for a seminar.

Class Participation

As we expect our graduate students to participate actively in our graduate level courses, they certainly should participate actively in discussions in any 300-level course they enroll in.

- Graduate Students could be asked to lead discussion groups or even to lecture.

Grading

And how should graduate students be graded? Generally, they should, of course, be graded to a higher standard than are undergraduates. Whether a professor elects to grade individual assignments to a higher standard or do so on a more general basis is, of course, at the option of the professor, but whatever the specific approach there is certainly no requirement that a graduate student must receive a minimum of a “B” in any course, any more than should an undergraduate.

Note!: Students should be aware that in order to receive credit for any course taken at the 300-level the course must be listed as a graduate course on your transcript—the course number must be followed by a “G” (i.e., His 398G).

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