

## GST Advanced Interdisciplinary Seminars: Online Courses

### Tips for Proposing and Developing Your Course

The following tips were developed in response to General Studies Council's reviews of previous applications and student feedback.

**General Comments:** Consider how you can best assure the upper-level seminar goals are accomplished by leveraging the opportunities offered by an online course. Graded discussion threads are *writing-intensive* and require *high-level critical thinking*; the online environment allows participation by multicultural guest experts from varied disciplines in scattered geographic locations; online scholarly resources offer depth of detail on *advanced subject matter*; the requirement of individual students' solo exploration of advanced concepts deepens critical-thinking skills.

<p><b>Advanced Subject Matter</b></p>	<p>How does your course help students investigate advanced subject matter in-depth? We suggest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fully developed proposal, including the required readings for the semester as well as outlines of writing assignments.</li> <li>• Depth of information more than volume/breadth of material.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interdisciplinary Approach</b></p>	<p>How does your course introduce and support both interdisciplinary material and interdisciplinary approaches to inquiry? We suggest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit discussions about the interdisciplinary nature of the course. Introduce the General Studies goals and upper-level GST expectations to students as part of your class orientation, and make the course's interdisciplinarity evident in the course design.</li> <li>• Assignment guidelines that foreground interdisciplinary expectations for research and writing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Effective Teaching</b></p>	<p>How does your course integrate a variety of pedagogical approaches? We suggest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear expectations for student participation and communication. How will your class communicate effectively throughout the online course? Explain exactly how often and when students are expected to participate and how their contributions will be assessed.</li> <li>• Course design tailored to the online environment. How might differences in the timing of the students' asynchronous participation and their distance from Elon affect the topic or the assignments? Tailor your content and the rhythm of expectations to optimize results. Calculate ways in which students' remote participation can be maximized.</li> <li>• Opportunities for student-led activities. If you have never taught an online course before, you will be amazed at how time-consuming it is. As you plan the course, concentrate on finding as many ways as possible for students to be responsible for the entire group's learning, and incorporate scaffolding that allows them to take ownership of the team's process and progress.</li> <li>• Activities and discussions that help students best leverage the integrated sense of self that can be found in a virtual environment. Explore online teaching tools, including: social networks such as Facebook; wiki and blogging software; and virtual-reality worlds such as Second Life.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Writing Intensive Methodology</b></p>	<p>How does your course incorporate writing-intensive instruction and support students in their development of advanced writing capabilities? We suggest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of the pros and cons of remote communication and the use of online tools. Cover issues such as ethical decision-making and the use of primary resources. Discuss: verifying specific details by checking them with several sources – offline as well as online; preventing plagiarism; doing one's own work; anticipating the problems and possibilities of resources like Wikipedia, etc.</li> <li>• Establish specific parameters for seeking out and using online resources. It pays to do your own research to find a wide range of the best materials on the Web and ask students to use them as a starting point. If left to wander through the billions of bytes of data on their own, they could lose valuable time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Advanced Critical Thinking</b></p>	<p>How does your course support advanced critical thinking? We suggest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear statements of your objectives and goals for the course.</li> <li>• Specific and clear assignments that measure attainment of your course goals and objectives.</li> <li>• Sufficient time to develop projects. Allow time to plan and revise projects before the final due date.</li> </ul>

To suggest additions to these tip sheets, please send your comments to the Director of General Studies who will share them with General Studies Council for further consideration.