

RULES, PROCEDURES, AND PREPARING FOR QUIZZES/TESTS/EXAMS (QTEs)

(This document is an extension of the Course Syllabus and it must be read and digested in conjunction with the syllabus.)

PART ONE How to Prepare for QTEs in this Course

- **1) Purpose of a QTE**

The main purpose of a quizzes/test/exams (QTEs) in this course is to determine if **(a)** you did your homework, and if so, **(b)** you did it *diligently*. Ergo, your responses must be *sufficiently* informative to reflect the accomplishment of these two objectives. ←Read this sentence again. (Question: what does the word **diligence** mean? Look it up.) **NOTE:** QTE(s) are NOT designed to determine how intelligent you are. QTE scores will not be an indication of your level of intelligence, but rather an indication of how much effort you put into the homework (if any).

- **2) Homework Assignments**

You are not permitted to attempt a QTE without *diligently* completing the relevant assigned homework

beforehand. ←Read this sentence again. Diligence in this instance means, at the very minimum **(a)** doing the assigned homework *on time*, per homework/test schedule; and **(b)** doing the homework as directed (e.g., DOWNLOADING, and viewing/studying material more than once without any kind of distractions—texting, gossiping, feeding your pet mouse, and so on,



well before the actual test date). **Warning:** Regardless of which race you believe you belong to, please do NOT racialize the epistemology on which this course rests. What does this mean in practice? The view

that since this course also deals with knowledge by and/or about people of color, it is not important enough to require *diligence*.

- **3) Preparing for QTEs**

This is not a course in rocket science, as you may have noticed from the sample test questions you were given (assuming you went through them with a fine toothcomb). However, if you are really serious about this course (meaning you are not taking it because you believe, erroneously, that it is an easy-A blow-off course), and you still need some guidance on how to prepare for the QTEs, then the following pointers will help:

(a) First, a reminder: This course is designed for those taking no more than 15 credit hours total, and do not have a full-time job. Homework, *on average*, will require about one hour per day of your time (which equals to about 7-8 hours per week--this is similar to doing 3 hours of class time, plus about 4 hours of homework for an in-person class). Tests/quizzes will be very demanding IF you don't do your homework on time per schedule, or if you don't do it at all, or if you do it SWD (studying while distracted). Since tests will be every two weeks, attempting to cram about 14-15 hours of homework into about 3-5 hours at the very last minute on test day will NOT allow you to do well on the tests—*in fact, you won't pass them*. Additionally, you may also wish to note that, *when it comes to studying for QTEs*, the human brain has evolved to handle assignments for later recall on the basis of *repetition* of whatever needs to be remembered, as it creates new neural pathways to handle the assignments. So, for example, *all other things being equal*—in terms of your year of study, intellectual competency, diligence, etc.—a person who studies an assignment (whatever format it may be in, a reading, a film, etc.) *twice* or even *thrice* will *always* do better than the person who attempts to do the assignment once *at the last minute*; that is, if at all. (People who attempt to do the homework at the last minute do not usually finish it; they run out of time.)

(b) QTEs will cover some or all assigned homework. Note, however, using the computer system's *statistical online access data*, from a combination of sources depending upon the homework, QTEs will lean more toward homework that lazy students did *not* do. (I call this the “**Lazy-Student Rule**” for creating QTEs.) For example, more questions may come from an assignment that only 50% or less of the class did the homework, going by the statistical online access data on *who* accessed the homework, and *when* it was accessed. In other words, you must do **all** the assignments; you cannot pick and choose at your whim.

(c) Given that you will be taking tests online without any supervision, when studying assigned homework do NOT prioritize information that you can easily look up on the internet that does

not require doing the homework (this is the “Internet Rule”). QTEs will be constructed to reflect this advice. Why? Think!

(d) Questions on QTEs will usually be of two types: “*factual*” and “*conceptual*.” “Factual” questions on the format/nature of the homework itself (e.g., film versus book versus journal article, etc.) will be *intellectually* very simple but yet difficult to answer **if** you did not do the homework at all, and/or you did not do it diligently, and/or you attempted to do it at the last minute. You can’t guess answers to factual questions. For example, you may be asked a question on an image or a key explanatory footnote in a reading (which you did not bother studying), or a question may ask you to simply identify a scene from among 3 or 4 scenes that the question describes that was NOT present in the assigned film. (In other words, it will be a scene that I will have made up.) Conceptual questions, on the other hand, are *intellectually* harder but easier to guess (even if you did not do the homework). By the way, factual questions will often have their conceptual significance indicated within the question itself. Conceptual questions relate to *interpretation* or *evaluation* of themes/theses in the assignment. For example, a question that asks you to complete a statement on the thesis of the author in a reading or the significance of a scene in a film is a conceptual question. **NOTE:** For online courses where there is no attendance required, and therefore no class participation, tests will lean more toward factual questions rather than conceptual questions. Why? Because there is no way for me to know that **you** actually did do the homework *diligently*; that is, you are not relying on guessing and/or cheating by relying on someone else’s notes (or even getting someone else to do the test for you by giving you the answers, or *bodily* substituting for you entirely). **Let me repeat this point:** For online courses where there is no attendance required, tests will lean more toward factual questions rather than conceptual questions. Why? Because there is no way for me to know that **you** actually did do the homework *diligently*; that is, you are not relying on guessing and/or cheating by relying on someone else’s notes (or even getting someone else to do the test for you by giving you the answers, or *bodily* substituting for you entirely). If you tell me simply that you did do the homework carefully, then my question to you is how will you prove that in an online class? Additionally, how come others in class are doing better than you?

(e) **When instructors take the time and effort to produce materials** for a course these materials take precedence over everything else. *Man, you have to be a super-genius not to figure this out by yourself.* So, in this course, you should, for example, be on the lookout for instructor-produced class lecture material either inside a video/film *or* as a reading assignment(s), or as a separate accompanying assignment. If it’s a video/film assignment, then this material, which will usually average about 40-50 minutes, will typically be at the beginning of the film, and it will comprise material that would normally be presented in class, such as: (a) lecture notes; (b) annotations of

scenes; (c) behind-the scenes material; (d) filmmaker interviews; (e) video clips with background information; (f) slide images; and so on. Sometimes, this audiovisual lecture material may be assigned as a separate item if its long. *Do not be tempted to ignore this material*; it is just as important as the film or documentary itself. As for reading assignments, instructor notes and/or annotations and/or slide images may appear at the beginning of the reading and/or may be interspersed throughout the reading. (Occasionally, the entire reading assignment may be instructor-produced.) Again, do not be tempted to ignore this material when it is present; it is just as important as the text itself.

(f) Here are some pointers on how to study any reading assignment: To begin with, you must study any images that may be present in a reading. (If there are captions then summarize them in your notes.) Check if a reading has subheadings; if they are present use them as a guide to organize your notes. With rare exception, I will not ask you about dates and names of places. Instead, what you should concentrate on is the "what," and the "why," and the implications / outcomes. (E.g., what were the main facts of, say, a rebellion, why did it occur, and what were the consequences for society at large.) Where the reading is an overview of, say, a system (e.g., slavery) or a major event (e.g., the Civil War) then identify the main themes and outcomes. In case of definitions, obviously concentrate on the main elements of the definition. If there are images in the definition, then study those too.

(g) Special note about homework that involves **AV materials**: Given the nature of AV materials (films, documentaries, videos, etc.), in comparison to the printed word, *everything*—more or less—is important in any homework that includes AV materials. What does *everything* mean? It means **everything**: (i) sound; (ii) text (notes, comments, etc.); (iii) visuals; (iv) plot or theme(s); and (v) characters. Moreover, if an entire video/film has been assigned, then it must be seen in its entirety! Trying to pick and choose scenes by fast-forwarding is not going to work. Additionally, you are required to watch the video/films *more than once*—leaving a couple of days in between. So, be careful about skipping scenes, including front and end material. If necessary, take **brief** notes! (Repeat, *brief* notes.) As already noted, to ascertain that you really did see the film (meaning that you are not being *duplicious* by relying on someone else's notes, etc.), many questions will be factual, that is, will be very specific. Additionally, as the syllabus explains, viewing and digesting AV materials in their entirety *is also an end in itself* in a given assignment. Why? Because of the special nature of AV materials, where the format (compared to a reading) is also the carrier of the "author's" thematic intent—the underlying purpose of the video/film. For example, the choice to shoot a film in black and white, rather than in color, is part of the filmmaker's thematic intent.

(h) Do *not* take *copious* notes because that will mean you are not really paying attention to the assignment, and it will also mean that during the test you won't have time to consult all your notes. Your notes should be really brief aimed at jogging your memory of those few scenes you may not remember (assuming you did the homework diligently).

(i) As already noted, since it is possible to cheat by looking up specific material on the main plot, on the characters, on scenes, and so on, on the internet without actually viewing the film OR viewing it only cursorily, questions will also be designed to really determine if you saw the assigned film in its entirety with *diligence*. ← Read this sentence again. In other words, there are no shortcuts to homework, IF you want to do well in this course.

(j) How do you take notes on AV material for this course? First, forget that you are watching the film for entertainment. Second, watch the film *more than once*, since you are going to be tested on it. This makes sense; yes? On, at least, a second viewing, create and write down "key words" as you go along to help you jog your memory regarding the scenes, storyline of the film, notes, comments, etc. Third, pay attention to how the film is *structured*—including paying attention to opening and end credits, the film score, and whether it has "chapters" or parts, and whether it has comments, subtitles, an introduction, etc. (By the way, a *shot* is a continuous filming of an action, view, etc., while a *scene*, in general, is a combination of shots that are edited together to create a sequence with a *theme*.) **WARNING:** As already noted, *your notes should not be too detailed*. Very detailed notes means (i) you are not really engaging with the homework, as you should, and (ii) you won't have enough time to adequately consult your notes during the test.

(k) If the AV material comprises a feature film and it is preceded by written lecture notes *and* other background material (usually labelled Section One or Prologue), do NOT under any circumstances skip that material!

(l) Please carefully study the *examples of test questions* (available via link on the class home page) to figure out how and what type of questions will be asked.

(m) **Warning:** As already noted, regardless of which race you believe you belong to, please do NOT racialize the epistemology on which this course rests. What does this mean in practice? The attitude that since this course deals with knowledge by and/or about black people it is not important enough to require *diligence*. ← What does this word mean? **Additionally**, do not scapegoat this course for your personal failure to do the homework diligently.

PART TWO

Rules and Procedures for QTEs

- **1) Multiple-choice Question Format**

If the QTE is of the multiple-choice questions type, then be aware that some questions may have more than one correct option. However, your task will be to select the option that provides the most complete information (which would be the MAIN point), relative to the others (subsidiary point). *See examples of test questions (available via link on the class home page).* Multiple choice questions may have a mixture of formats, e.g., regular questions format; fill-in-the-blank; completion of second half of thematic statements; true-false; and so on.

- **2) Fairness**

Every effort will be made to ensure that QTE's are fair in at least two ways: they reflect assigned homework, and questions are comprehensible. Regarding the latter, I may assign automatic bonus points to take care of any problematic questions that may inadvertently creep in. **Note:** If you think that you found a problematic question, from the perspective of the validity of the options, you are welcome to contact me about it. However, before you do so, make sure that you have cross-checked the options with the relevant homework. Thereafter, if you are still absolutely certain that the question is indeed problematic, then provided (a) it meets the test of "universal failure" (meaning everyone else in class got it wrong too), and (b) provided I determine that you deserve a point for the question (universal failure can still take place on a perfectly valid question) you should also (c) agree to forfeiting any bonus points that may have been allocated for the test. Incidentally, depending upon what kind of issue you are raising, I may also look into whether you did the all the homework for the test *diligently* (repeat diligently).

- **3) Guessing**

You are not permitted to attempt a test, as indicated above, without diligently completing the relevant assigned homework beforehand. Therefore, guessing is not permitted on tests.

- **4) Make-ups**

QTEs cannot be made up, with rare exception, unless you have a *bona fide* **documented** excuse. (See also note below.) ←Read this sentence again.

- **5) Scores**

Preliminary scores will be available via Blackboard. However, **final scores** will be posted online via a link on the *class home page* and NOT on Blackboard. (The final score will either always be the same as the preliminary score or higher than the preliminary score.)

- **6) Points**

Points for letter-grade equivalents: See the syllabus.

- **7) QTE Procedures**

As per school regulations, to discourage cheating, AND for the sake of fairness to all, it is necessary to institute specific anti-cheating procedures. Yes, yes, of course, of course, I know you are an honest person; you have always been an honest person; **you** never cheat; but does this apply to everyone else? Think about this: there is an entire office on campus, the Office of Academic Integrity, dedicated to dealing with the problem of cheating at UB (which costs UB a lot of money—leaving aside issues of ethics). In fact, because this is an online course there is no way of knowing what you are doing when you are taking a QTE, whenever you *claim* you experienced a technical problem of some sort that is preventing you from completing a QTE (or sitting for one), *when others taking the QTE are not facing the same problem*, then my default position is that you were trying to cheat in some way. Anyhow, please pay close attention to these rules:

(a) Do not use a phone to do QTEs in this course. In fact, you are not permitted to do homework on phones either. Why? Because the course has not been designed for phones; it has been designed to be accessed on computers.

(b) As per announcement on **Blackboard** (UBLearns) at the beginning of the semester, all QTEs will be available on Blackboard (everything else, including your final scores for all QTEs will be accessible via your class home page—the same page that brought you this document).

(c) After the test goes live on **Blackboard**, QTEs **must** be completed on the specified date/time within the time allocated for the test once the test commences. (For example: if the test begins at 2:00 pm it will end at 3:00 pm, if one hour has been allocated for the test.) See next point.

(d) Tests will be timed; that is, you won't be able to continue with the test beyond the specified time-limit.

(e) Once you begin a test it **must** be completed at *one sitting*; if you stop, **regardless of the reason**,

you will not be able to go back to it under *any circumstances*. ← Read this sentence again. See also next point.

(f) Every test/exam in this course has been technically designed to prevent it being “re-opened” if somewhere in the middle you stop working on it for whatever reason (technical or otherwise). This is to prevent cheating. So please don’t send me e-mails asking me to reopen a test. It will not be possible for me to do so. If there is a documented *legitimate* reason why you stopped working on a test, then a make-up will have to be constructed. (See also below.)

(g) Questions will be presented to you *one at a time* (not all at once).

(h) Questions will be randomized across all students; meaning not all students will be presented with identical questions—even though the questions will cover the same material. ← Read this sentence again. What questions and in what order they are received will be determined by the Blackboard’s computer algorithm.

(i) Please do not start looking for answers in your homework during the test if you never did the homework at all (or did it SWD—studying while distracted) and thereby running out of time—prompting you to falsely claim that your internet went down, or your computer exploded, or your screen melted, or you were logged off, etc. If you send me an e-mail claiming your internet connection went down and therefore you wish to redo the test, I will not automatically accept your claim. Sending me a shot of your computer screen will *not* constitute sufficient evidence *in this instance*. Why? Because anyone can recreate a false screen message of no internet connection by various methods. Yes, yes. I know you never cheat in this way. But what about others? For other technical problems you claim you have encountered, you must take a picture of the entire computer screen, from edge to edge, and e-mail it to me. On the basis of some investigation (e.g., whether you did your homework, if at all, on time; your performance in class so far; at which point in the test the problem you are claiming arose; and so on) I *may* allow you to do a make-up. However, in such a case the next rule below will apply. Note also that if I am really suspicious, I may hand your case over to the Academic Integrity office, which will carry with it much more serious implications. Cheating is not fair on those of your classmates who do their work, and of course there are other ethical implications as well. Here, let me also add this: I began teaching this course long before you were born—*let that sink in for a second*—and I have seen more or less everything. Therefore, I am always suspicious when people come up with excuses that are not documented *beyond a reasonable doubt*. **Check this out:** A fairly common ruse some students use when they are not prepared for a QTE is to *claim* that they are looking at the Course page on Blackboard but they do not see the QTE, and are wondering if it has been posted yet. Meanwhile,

everyone else has no problem seeing the QTE and have actually begun taking the QTE. If you send me an e-mail with this false claim, you must also attach to it a picture of your *entire* computer screen with the course page on Blackboard that you claim you are looking at. (Entire computer screen means your picture should capture everything on the screen, including the entire browser window, all the way up to the edge of each of the four sides of your computer.) This requirement, by the way, also applies to those who falsely claim they can't see a link or page for an assignment (on the internet), whereas everyone else in the class can.

(j) Because my classes tend to be large, if you are allowed to do a make-up test, then, with rare exception, you will have to take it sometime **at a later date** (usually during the exam period at the end of the semester). ← Read this sentence again. This will also allow me to see if there is a pattern with your make-up requests. Note also: Test make-ups are time-consuming and interfere with my other important school-related commitments. So, please show you appreciation if I allow you to do a retake/make-up. How? By studying well and doing well on the test.

(k) Your preliminary score, repeat preliminary score (not the final score) will be available *after the test is over for everyone, via Blackboard*. However, **final revised scores** (that is with bonus points where applicable) will be posted online via a link on the *Class Home Page*, and NOT on Blackboard.

• 8) Grading

No, grades will not be curved in this course. (2 + 2 *always* equals 4, even if only one student out of a million got it correct on a test. Yes?) NOTE: *Final course grades* will be accessible only via the MYUB portal and NOT Blackboard or the class home page.

9) Personal Responsibility

When a student tells me that they are not doing well (*when others in class are*) in this (a) simple online class with no attendance and class participation; with (b) light reading assignments; with (c) no textbooks to purchase; and (d) simple multiple choice question tests that are (e) unproctored and (f) open book, and (g) the student is sometimes given the opportunity to re-do the tests, then based on years of experience, I am going to assume that the student is not doing his or her part. May be the student attempts to do the homework at the last minute (if at all). May be the



student has too much on her/his plate (too many credit hours, a time-consuming job, too much interaction with computer games and social media, family problems, etc.), and/or the student is just plain lazy.

- **10) Clarification of this Document**

If you need further clarification about something in this document, please make sure that (a) your email is in the format specified in the syllabus, and (b) you quote the exact sentence, paragraph, or wording from this document that your question is about in your email. (Quoting does *not* mean taking a picture of the page.)
