# Rubric for Evaluation of Online Courses

## I. COURSE OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

**General Review Standard:** The overall design of the course, navigation, and instructor information are clear to the student at the beginning of the course.

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<th>Standards in Review</th>
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| **I.1 Course Introduction**  | A statement by the instructor welcomes, introduces students to the course and provides clear directions on how the student is to get started in the course. | - Clear directions about how to get started in the course in the form of an announcement.  
  - A statement of welcome either in the form of a whole class email or announcement.  
  - Set the tone for quality: everything should be free of typos or messiness. |        |                                                               |
| **I.2 Course Layout/Design** | Course layout is easy to understand and navigate.                                                 | The following are easy to locate, navigate and understand:  
  - Course calendar or critical dates for assignments  
  - Faculty contact information  
  - Syllabus  
  - Required course activities  
  - Grading system  
  - Testing procedures (online or proctored).  
  - Procedure for submission of assignments  
  - Discussion Board instructions |        |                                                               |
| **I.3 Syllabus Expectations**| Syllabus conforms to college standards of required elements.                                      | The following statements must appear on the course syllabus:  
  - Course and section # listed  
  - Faculty contact information  
  - Clearly explained grading policies  
  - Office and other available hours for student access and support  
  - Schedule of course activities  
  - Student learning outcomes |        |                                                               |
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<th>1.4 Netiquette Guidelines</th>
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<td>1.5 Faculty Self-Introduction</td>
<td>The initial introduction should help to create a sense of connection between the instructor and the students. It should present the instructor as professional as well as approachable, and it should go beyond essentials (i.e. instructor’s name, title, field of expertise, and email address).</td>
<td>Instructor might include information such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Teaching philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Past experiences with teaching online classes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal information such as hobbies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Photograph</td>
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<td>• Audio or video files expressing welcome to the course, etc.</td>
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| 1.6 Students Introduction | The student introduction helps to create a supportive learning environment and a sense of community. Instructors should consider providing an example of an introduction and/or start the process by introducing themselves. **Note to Evaluator:** Look for a request that students introduce themselves, as well as instructions on where and how they should do so. | Student bio or student introduction forum is required. Instructors may ask students to answer specific questions such as:  
- Why they are taking the course  
- What concerns they have, what they expect to learn, etc.)  
- Student’s major  
- Hobbies  
- Learning Style  
- Strengths in specific discipline areas  
- Or may choose to let the student decide |
## II. ASSESSMENT AND MEASUREMENT

**General Review Standard:** Effective assessment strategies are used to measure student progress and the achievement of the course learning outcomes.

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<td>II.1  <strong>Methods of Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Multiple methods of assessment measure the achievement of stated course learning outcomes.</td>
<td>Multiple methods of assessment may include: requirement to write papers, interact with others through discussion board, virtual chat, quizzes, exams, etc. Example that does NOT meet this standard: Students are required to take tests, but no other method of assessment is utilized.</td>
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<td>II.2  <strong>Grading Policy</strong></td>
<td>The course grading policy is easy to locate and understand.</td>
<td>The grading policy should be easy to locate and understand. How course activities are graded, and how the final grade is calculated should be easy to understand. For specific assignments, look for clear directions that guide the learning process—examples of expected work, grading rubrics, etc.</td>
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<td>II.3  <strong>Appropriate Feedback and Tone</strong></td>
<td>Students learn more effectively if they receive frequent, meaningful, and rapid feedback with a positive tone. This feedback should come from the instructor directly, periodically, and substantively.</td>
<td>There should be some evidence within the course of appropriately timed feedback. Whole class feedback on papers, projects, etc. is also to be expected. Some of the feedback to students should be non-automated, and individualized, so the instructor is visible to students. (Example that does NOT meet the standard: A course in which the entire set of assessments consists of 5 multiple</td>
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<td>II.4 Grade-center Tool</td>
<td>The Grade-center tool is utilized, so students can monitor their progress.</td>
<td>Students are able to view their assignment/quiz grades at any time and monitor their course progress. Comments sections should be used for feedback or work evaluation.</td>
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<td>II.5 Notification of Concern</td>
<td>Evidence of contact with at-risk students (e.g. students who are not participating sufficiently early in the term or who fail the first graded task) is demonstrated by the instructor.</td>
<td>Instructor should be able to provide copies of emails sent to specific students expressing concern over missed assignments, late work, etc.</td>
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III. LEARNER INTERACTION

General Review Standard: Effective uses of instructor-student interaction to increase motivation, promote intellectual commitment, and assist in personal development.

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<th>Standards in Review</th>
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| III.1 Learner Engagement | The course design provides learning activities to foster instructor-student, content-student, and student-student interaction/engagement. Note to reviewer in regards to instructor-learner communication: It is appropriate to ask the instructor under review for samples of emails: a) whole class emails sent to all students, and b) emails sent to individual students. | The learning activities in the course should foster the following types of interaction:  
- Instructor-learner: Self-introduction; discussion postings and responses; feedback on assignments; evidence of one-to-one email communication, etc. Note that, during the term, there should be some student specific feedback or individualized feedback built into the course design and evident to the reviewer.  
- Learner-content: Essays, term papers, group projects, etc. based on readings, videos, and other course content; self-assessment exercises; group work products, etc.  
- Learner-learner: Self-introduction exercise; group discussion postings; group projects; peer critiques, etc. At least one assignment or learning activity should involve substantive learner-learner interaction. | | |
<p>| III.2 Student Interaction Requirements | The student requirements for course interaction or engagement are clearly articulated. A clear statement of requirements is particularly important | Students required to participate in discussions are told how many times each week they must post original comments, how many times they must post responses to other’s comments, what the quality of the comments must be, how the comments will be evaluated, and what grade or credit they can expect for various levels of | | |</p>
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<th>III.3 Instructor Response and Availability</th>
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<td>Students need clear information about how quickly the instructor will respond to student requests or concerns and grading of assessments. Informing students about instructor response time and availability prevents unreasonable expectations from developing. Look for a statement of a timely response to student questions, return of assessment/grade and instructor phone number, office or email availability for the student.</td>
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<td>Look for clear standards for instructor response time, including email turnaround time (e.g. 48 hours), time required for grading, etc. Also look for clear standards for instructor availability including degree of participation in discussions, email response time (e.g. 48 hours), and availability via other media (phone, in-person) if applicable. Note: instructor should respond to emails ideally within 24 hours, but no more than 48 hours.</td>
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- Discussion Board work should be required in almost all courses. Instructor should comment or provide feedback on the vast majority of discussion board requirements. Sometimes the feedback may take the form of whole class or general holistic feedback but some feedback should be individualized. Online teacher should be able to provide evidence (emails or comments sections of My Grades) of such. 
- Online attendance policy is clearly stated.
### III.4 Instructor/Learner Engagement

Students need to feel that the instructor is close at hand—“visible”—but the opportunities and types of engagement will vary with the discipline of the course.

There should be evidence of weekly contact between instructor and students to include weekly posted announcements and/or weekly whole class emails.

Look for examples such as:
- Emails or announcements that encourage students to complete the course, to hang in there, etc.
- An actively used and well-organized instructor-facilitated discussion board
- Optional “electronic office hours” provided in the chat room
- An invitation for the class to email the instructor with individual concerns

### III.5 Show commitment to student engagement by introducing new elements into course or via on-going elements that are clearly designed to facilitate student engagement.

Create or maintain elements specifically designed to increase student engagement with the course.

Examples:

1. From the beginning of the course, have ready a link to Frequently Asked Questions.

2. Establish an “extra resources” section of your course. Find things happening in the everyday world outside your course that relate to your subject. The more students see such connections, the more important your course will become to them, beyond a grade.

3. Require students to pitch in. Whether you do this in a discussion thread or elsewhere, have each student find three Web sites useful to the subject or to your course, and three other Web sites that are fun or unusual. Be sure each student adds a line of explanation about each of the sites. Students will feel a true part of the course, and all of you might learn something new and have fun in the process.

4. Steer discussion threads in the direction of students’ professional needs. Ask students to comment on the course topic as it relates to their majors and professional goals. The more personal ownership they feel over the online classroom and the course content, the more committed they will remain to the work, and the more likely they will be to keep participating in discussions.
| III.6  Directions for contacting instructor | Directions for contacting the instructor (and mentor, if applicable) are easily found and in more than one location. | Look for examples in:  
- Syllabus  
- Course homepage  
- Course overview  
- Introduction |
## Rubric for Evaluation of Online Courses James Gipson Philosophy and Religion

### I. COURSE OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

**General Review Standard:** The overall design of the course, navigation, and instructor information are clear to the student at the beginning of the course.

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• A statement of welcome either in the form of a whole class email or announcement.  
• Set the tone for quality: everything should be free of typos or messiness. | Yes | |
| I.2 Course Layout/Design | Course layout is easy to understand and navigate. | The following are easy to locate, navigate and understand:  
• Course calendar or critical dates for assignments  
• Faculty contact information  
• Syllabus  
• Required course activities  
• Grading system  
• Testing procedures (online or proctored).  
• Procedure for submission of assignments  
• Discussion Board instructions | Yes | |
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  - Teaching philosophy 
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  - Photograph 
  - Audio or video files expressing welcome to the course, etc. | Yes |
### 1.6 Students Introduction

The student introduction helps to create a supportive learning environment and a sense of community. Instructors should consider providing an example of an introduction and/or start the process by introducing themselves.

**Note to Evaluator:**
Look for a request that students introduce themselves, as well as instructions on where and how they should do so.

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|                      | • Student’s major  
|                      | • Hobbies  
|                      | • Learning Style  
|                      | • Strengths in specific discipline areas  
|                      | • Or may choose to let the student decide |
| This is our first assignment. It helps us understand the student’s philosophy and I often refer back to them to understand circumstances. |
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directly, periodically, and substantively during the term. Also, feedback may come from assignments and assessments that have feedback built into them, but exclusive reliance on automated feedback is not good practice.

Even when students do poorly, they will benefit and be motivated to try harder next time if online teacher’s explanations for their poor grades are detailed and encouraging.

Be sure the teacher’s comments on assignments point out not only when something is incorrect but also why it is wrong and how to get it right in the future. Students are given a breakdown of how teacher arrived at their grades (and if it’s an ungraded assignment, give them faux grades so they can get a sense of the quality of work they are submitting). Teacher point out a few things the student got right—especially for students who got a lot wrong. Positive tone is struck in the final sentence of comments, for instance.

| II.4 Grade-center Tool | The Grade-center tool is utilized, so students can monitor their progress. | Students are able to view their assignment/quiz grades at any time and monitor their course progress. Comments sections should be used for feedback or work evaluation. | yes |
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At least one assignment or learning activity should involve substantive learner-learner interaction. | Yes | |
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requirements is particularly important when a type of interaction (e.g. participation in a discussion) is not optional. What are the penalties for non-participation? Impact on grade, etc.?

• Discussion Board work should be required in almost all courses. Instructor should comment or provide feedback on the vast majority of discussion board requirements. Sometimes the feedback may take the form of whole class or general holistic feedback but some feedback should be individualized. Online teacher should be able to provide evidence (emails or comments sections of My Grades) of such.
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| III.4 Instructor/Learner Engagement | Students need to feel that the instructor is close at hand—“visible”—but the opportunities and types of engagement will vary with the discipline of the course. | There should be evidence of weekly contact between instructor and students to include weekly posted announcements and/or weekly whole class emails. Look for examples such as:  
- Emails or announcements that encourage students to complete the course, to hang in there, etc.  
- An actively used and well-organized instructor-facilitated discussion board  
- Optional “electronic office hours” provided in the chat room  
- An invitation for the class to email the instructor with individual concerns | I encourage students who may have difficulties to visit me on campus when possible to show them first hand how to do an assignment they do not understand. |
| III.5 Show commitment to student engagement by introducing new elements into course or via on-going elements that are clearly designed to facilitate student engagement. | Create or maintain elements specifically designed to increase student engagement with the course. | Examples:  
1. From the beginning of the course, have ready a link to Frequently Asked Questions.  
2. Establish an “extra resources” section of your course. Find things happening in the everyday world outside your course that relate to your subject. The more students see such connections, the more important your course will become to them, beyond a grade.  
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4. Steer discussion threads in the direction of students’ professional needs. Ask students to comment on the course topic as it relates to their majors and professional goals. The more personal ownership they feel over the online classroom and the course content, the more committed they will remain to the work, and the more likely they will be | They are asked to reply to at least two students when posting a Bb assignment. |
to keep participating in discussions.

5. Offer live chats on a bi-weekly or tri-weekly basis. A live chat at the beginning of each week (assuming your course is set up for that) can serve as an overview of the coming week’s assignments, musings on previous assignments, etc. This may offer yet another opportunity to help students “get it right” when it comes to both the course material and assignments.*


| III.6 Directions for contacting instructor | Directions for contacting the instructor (and mentor, if applicable) are easily found and in more than one location. | Look for examples in:  
• Syllabus  
• Course homepage  
• Course overview  
• Introduction | We post them in the contact information and it is in my emails I send out. |