



Graduate Teaching & Laboratory Assistants Orientation

Syllabus Creation

What your syllabus says is an extremely important element of your course. A syllabus is a contract between you and your students. It clarifies your relationships, expectations, policies, and procedures. In addition, it is a way of connecting with your students immediately and giving them a view of you and your course. Your syllabus may be created by the faculty member in charge of the class you will help teach, or you may have to develop one from scratch. Either way, you may want to clarify or enlarge upon the following questions:

What . . .

- ...will be studied? What are the topics, themes, issues and questions?
- ...kind of prerequisites are necessary for this course?
- ...specific rules and regulations will apply to this course?
- ...are the objectives of the course?
- ...will students be able to do after they take this course?
- ...books are required for the course?
- ...order will the instructor use to present the material and what is the rationale for organizing the course in a particular way?
- ...kind of instruction will take place? Will the course be primarily lectures, discussions or group work?
- ...kind of participation is required? Will attendance, questions, responses and level of preparation count?
- ...kind of learning will take place? Will students analyze, synthesize, compare or contrast? What are students expected to be able to do? How will students practice these skills?
- ...are the major requirements? Are they clearly described? What is the goal of the assignment? What strategies will help the student successfully complete the assignments?
- ...evaluation procedures will be used? How do they measure student performance on the behaviors described in the course objectives? What kind of tests will be given?
- ...counts in the final grade? What percentage of the grade is assigned to each test or requirement and why?

Why . . .

- ...were the books chosen for this course? How will they be used in the course?
- ...should students want to take this course? Is it relevant to student goals?
- ...are the objectives important and how will the course help students accomplish those objectives?

Avoid just listing assignments and important dates without a rationale for your choices. Try to link the content with your students' interests and needs. Use your syllabus to really communicate with your students.

Essential Components of Any Syllabus

- Title of the course and course number
- Building name and room number where the class convenes
- Instructor's name, include first name if you want students to have the option of calling you by first name
- Instructor's office, building name (if different from where the class is held) and room number
- Office hours, days and times
- Telephone number, either your office's or the department's
- Instructor's email address
- Required texts and materials, including required lab fees
- Purpose and goals of the course
- Description of how students earn grades, giving percentages for major assignments
- Attendance policy
- University academic honesty policy, summarized with reference to *A Culture of Honesty*
- Due dates of important projects or assignments
- Any applicable procedures or policies (e.g. paper or lab report format, policy on late work, extra credit options, expectations concerning participation)
- Statement of accommodations for students with disabilities

Suggested Components of Any Syllabus

- Attractive design (e.g. readable font type and size, colored paper, appropriate pictures or cartoons)
- Mention of relevant electronic resources (e.g. WebCt, class Listserv, departmental URL, links to personal sites that may include a philosophy of teaching statement)
- Interesting and relevant quotations
- Contact numbers for Academic Enhancement, the Writing Center, and other on-campus academic resources