

Course Syllabus

What is the purpose of a course syllabus?

- Help students clearly identify what they can expect to learn, what materials will be used to support their learning and how their learning will be measured.
- Set the tone for the course
- Establish clear expectations for student and instructor performance
- Provide a schedule for assignments and assessments throughout the semester.
- Provide a method of communication between student and instructor

Steps to consider when developing a course syllabus:

- Course content: What is your course about?
- Establish learning objectives – what do you want students to be able to do or understand by the end of the course? You may consider developing essential questions that the course is designed to answer in a backwards-design type of approach. Your learning objectives can outline how students will develop answers to those essential questions.
 - See links below for guidelines on creating learning outcomes
- What materials will be needed for the course?
- What assignments will be used to assess learning outcomes?
- A course schedule including assignments and due dates.
- Make-up and late work policies.
- Address course logistics – discussion-based, lecture, group work, off-campus excursions...
- Graphics to enhance design: perhaps discipline specific or something that represents your personality/interests = personalize it, get creative with the layout
- Provide an outline for your teaching philosophy and how learning will occur in your class
- The more concise and explicit the syllabus, the easier it will be for you and your students to follow it. Think about formatting and organization that will facilitate readability.
- Consider your audience – how do you want students to engage and connect with the syllabus? How might you demonstrate an effort to connect to students?
- Outline how to succeed in the course including the behaviors of a successful student.

How to encourage students to engage with the syllabus and take responsibility for their own learning:

- Create learning activities around syllabus such as group and individual quizzes
- Provide a space where both student and instructor pledge their expectations, commitment and responsibilities to the course.
- Provide students a hard copy of syllabus

- Have students contribute to syllabus design such as defining methods to process and demonstrate knowledge that break the boundaries of traditional assessment. (Example: students design options for final project platform that differ from traditional delivery of written and oral expression. Maybe they design an interpretive dance, a 3D model, a short film...)
- 3-4 weeks into the semester have students take out the syllabus and do a 5 minute free-write where they describe their first impressions of the course, syllabus and instructor, ask for feedback on syllabus

Syllabus template:

- <https://nau.edu/OCLDAA/Forms/UCC/syllabus/>

Syllabus evaluation rubrics:

- <https://www.cte.cornell.edu/documents/Syllabus%20Rubric.pdf>
- <http://cte.virginia.edu/resources/syllabus-rubric/>
- <https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/cetl/docs/Rubric%20for%20Assessing%20Your%20Teaching%20Syllabus.pdf>

Articles on syllabus development

- Overview
<https://www.cte.cornell.edu/teaching-ideas/designing-your-course/writing-a-syllabus.html>
<https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/course-preparation-resources/creating-syllabus>
- Learner-centered syllabi
http://www.4faculty.org/Demo/read2_main.htm
- Course and syllabus design
<http://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/preparing-to-teach/designing-your-course-and-syllabus/>
- Syllabus interpretations
<http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/what-does-your-syllabus-say-about-you-and-your-course/>