It’s In The Syllabus

10 Tips For Transparent Syllabus Design

Remember, your syllabus is a contract between you and your students, so you will want to make sure your expectations for the course are very clear to your students!

Tip 1: Describe the Basics

Of course you should include the basics: the course title, course number, course description, course meeting days/times, and location. Make sure students have your contact information and how best to contact you - email, phone, social media. Don’t forget to include when they should expect to hear back from you (24 hours, 3 days, etc.). Include your office location and office hours.

Sample Syllabus:

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Academic Inquiry & Scholarship (AIS) 1203 Course Syllabus

Pathway: Arts and Humanities Pathway
Fall 2017 -- AIS 1203 (SECTION)
Tuesday/Thursday 4:00-5:15 pm -- LOCATION

Instructor: Dr. Shelley Howell
Phone: 720-525-3568 (cell) or 210-458-6778 (office)
Email: shelley.howell@utsa.edu or drshelley@outlook.com
Web site: www.drshelleyhowell.com (click here for more about me)
Social Media: @drshelleyhowell (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram)
Office: John Peace Library (JPL) 4.03.18A
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 5:15-6:45 pm
NOTE: I will return calls and reply to messages within 24 hours in most cases. A text message is the best way to communicate with me if you need a quick response.

Course Description
This introductory course will provide you with an introduction to the sub-disciplines and core methods of the humanities and the fine arts. Over the course of the semester, you will encounter a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including philosophy, English, music, art history, modern languages, and more....
Tip 2: Tell Them About You
Include a brief bio and a bit about your teaching philosophy. Make it personal! Tell them something unusual about you or your family. It’s important for students to see you as a person, in addition to a professor.

Sample Syllabus:

About Me
With Nobel Laureate Dr. Susumu Tonegawa, I pioneered the field of Molecular and Cellular Cognition. I was part of a research group that played a key role in the development of Molecular and Cellular Cognition into a mainstream neuroscience field. I founded and became the first President of the Molecular and Cellular Cognition Society, an international organization with more than 4000 members and with branches in North America, Asia and Europe...

My Teaching Philosophy
Every instructor you have will have different expectations and course requirements. I will place a lot of emphasis on participation and effort in this course. This course is designed to give you a foundation for the rest of your university studies and I expect you to take the course and its assignments and assessments seriously. I expect...

Tip 3: List Outcomes
You will definitely want to include your course learning outcomes and make sure your assignments are measuring those outcomes. Where it’s applicable, you can also include university, program, and department learning outcomes so students can see where your course fits into the bigger picture of their program.

Sample Syllabus:

Learning Outcomes for AIS
This first-year course contributes to the following measurable outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Goals</th>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Student Required Core Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To develop critical thinking skills.</td>
<td>Students will critically evaluate scholarly materials within an academic pathway.</td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop communication skills.</td>
<td>Students will synthesize information in order to develop effective communication skills.</td>
<td>Communication (visual and oral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop leadership skills.</td>
<td>Students will identify successful and responsible leadership skills.</td>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tip 4: Include Material Requirements

Include how to obtain all required and recommended textbooks, electronic and reserve readings, and any other course materials such as a calculator, iClicker or special tools for your course.

- Explain any technology requirements. Will students need to have an electronic device?
- Make sure they know where and how to obtain all of these items.

Sample Syllabus:

Required Texts/Materials

All course materials will be available electronically through the course in Blackboard.

The following are required for this course:

iClicker, iClicker account and subscription. A package with the iClicker and 5-year subscription are available at the campus bookstore for $49.99 (ISBN: 9781498602839); I highly encourage this option. Caution: If you purchase a used iClicker, you will need to purchase a subscription separately (at iClicker.com or the campus bookstore). If you plan to only use your phone/tablet/laptop in class for polling and choose not to purchase a clicker, you will still need a subscription. Subscriptions are available for varying time lengths, based on your needs.

Laptop, tablet or other mobile device with wifi capability, and access to Microsoft Office Word, Excel and PowerPoint. (NOTE: Laptops can be checked out at the library front desk on a first-come, first-served basis; and Office 365 is free on your myUTSA.edu account.)

Tip 5: Set Expectations

Include your expectations for attendance, class preparation, class participation (not the same as attendance!), exam preparation, writing quality and whether or not you offer extra credit.

- Share your examples of good student work and what you consider not-so-good student work.
- Use rubrics for clarifying what you expect in assignments and share the rubrics with your students.
- Include a clear grading scale.

Sample Syllabus:

Course Requirements

Attendance/Participation

Regular attendance is necessary for successful completion of the course and is, therefore, mandatory. Class attendance and participation make up 15% of your final grade. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. Dropping a course is always your responsibility...
Assessments
Each assessment in this course is worth 100 points. Collectively, these assessments make up 40% of your final grade...

Your second written paper will be on your personal culture. This paper will be graded based on several factors: How well you covered the given topic, the depth of your analysis of your culture, and the academic nature of the paper (style, grammar, format, etc.). Assignment instructions can be found in Blackboard.

Extra Credit
Some extra credit may be allowed for extenuating circumstances. If you would like to discuss extra credit, contact me...

Click here to view sample Rubrics.

Tip 6: Explain Everything
Thoroughly explain all assignments and assessments. The more clear the instructions, the less discontent you will have among students. Make sure students know where and how to submit assignments. Include copies or samples of any grading rubrics or criteria that you use.

Sample Syllabus:

Assignments
These three major assignments collectively make up 25% of your final grade. All assignments should be submitted in Blackboard by the deadline. Do NOT bring paper copies to class

Journal: Each week of the course, you are expected to complete a journal entry. Often, the topic will be prescribed and other times you will be free to write about a topic of your choice (related to the course, of course). The journal topic will be announced in class each week. There is a specific location for your private journal on Blackboard. Look for the “Journals” link. Be aware that there is no specific length requirement for your journal; however, substance is expected. I expect you to reflect on what you are learning and what it means to you personally and professionally in each journal entry. Your journal entries will not be graded based on grammar, structure or spelling. They will be graded based on substance. Your journal can only be seen by you, me and the TA for the course.

Tip 7: Share Policies
Include all course, department and relevant university policies, or at least the links. Don’t forget academic integrity, sexual harassment, ADA and student code of conduct information. You can find syllabus templates and UTSA requirements on the Teaching and Learning Services web site.
Sample Syllabus:

Class Policies

Academic Honesty
You, as a student, are expected to be above reproach in scholastic activities. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and dismissal from the University. According to The Regents' Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22, ...For more information regarding the UTSA Student Code of Conduct, consult the following:
http://catalog.utsa.edu/informationbulletin/appendices/studentcodeofconduct/

Submission of Coursework
All assignments will be submitted online through the UTSA Blackboard course site for grading purposes. When submitting to Blackboard, assignments must be submitted on or before the specified due date and ....

Quality of Work
All written work submitted must be of professional quality, neatly presented, grammatically correct, and free of spelling and punctuation errors. All written assignments should be ...

Tip 8: Provide a Calendar
Include assignment due dates, exam dates and class meeting dates. Don't forget holidays, study days and final exam times/days. If you are so inclined, include odd national days like September 19 – Talk Like a Pirate Day. Students appreciate the humor.

Sample Syllabus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUG 22</td>
<td>PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS IN HISTORY</td>
<td>CH 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 24</td>
<td>ADDICTION</td>
<td>CH 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 29</td>
<td>BRAIN CHEMISTRY</td>
<td>CH 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUG 31</td>
<td>CONT'D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 5</td>
<td>EXAM # 1 ON CHAPTERS 1 &amp; 2 (20%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 7</td>
<td>COCAINE/AMPHETAMINES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 12</td>
<td>TOBACCO</td>
<td>CH 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 14</td>
<td>CONT'D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 19</td>
<td>CONT'D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 21</td>
<td>EXAM # 2 ON CHAPTER 3 (20%)</td>
<td>CH 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 26</td>
<td>OPIATES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 28</td>
<td>SEDATIVES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT 3</td>
<td>ALCOHOL</td>
<td>CH 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT 5</td>
<td>CONT'D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT 10</td>
<td>CONT'D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT 12</td>
<td>EXAM # 3 ON CHAPTERS 4 &amp; 5 (20%)</td>
<td>CH 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT 17</td>
<td>MARUANA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT 19</td>
<td>LSD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT 24</td>
<td>CLUB DRUGS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT 26</td>
<td>PSYCHEDELICS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT 31</td>
<td>CONT'D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV 2</td>
<td>EXAM # 4 ON CHAPTER 6 (20%)</td>
<td>CH 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV 7</td>
<td>ANABOLIC STEROIDS (Post-Course Survey)</td>
<td>CH 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV 9</td>
<td>DRUGS &amp; SPORTS (Individual Project due)</td>
<td>CH 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV 14</td>
<td>CONT'D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV 18</td>
<td>INHALANTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV 21</td>
<td>CONT'D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOV 23</td>
<td>THANKSGIVING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tip 9: Make it Readable

Be clear and concise. Pay attention to format, use one font and one style. Use white space and eliminate special effects, colors and special fonts. The key is to make the syllabus readable and easy to understand. This is an important document that serves as a contract, you do not want ambiguity, nor do your students.

Tip 10: Add Additional Learning Resources

Include links to additional readings, specific campus services, or online tutorials for those who may need or want special assistance. Include assistance for your specific content area and for college success in general.

Sample Syllabus:

Tomás Rivera Center

I encourage you to utilize the Tomás Rivera Center’s (TRC) student support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. These services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services, please visit the TRC web site at http://www.utsa.edu/trcss

- **Academic Success Coaching** provides one-on-one study skills assistance and group study skills assistance. Call the office to schedule an Academic Coaching appointment at (210) 458-4694, visit the TRC web site for the Expert Learner Series schedule, or stop by MS 1.02.02.

- **Supplemental Instruction (SI)** offers student-led study groups using collaborative learning for historically difficult classes. You can call the SI office if you have questions or for more information at (210) 458-7251.

- **Tutoring Services** provides walk-in tutoring in a variety of subjects with several locations to choose from and the Math Assistance Program (MAP) for assistance in College Algebra and Pre-Calculus. Call (210) 458-6783 for more information or visit the TRC web site for tutoring schedules.

Questions?

Contact Dr. Shelley Howell, Teaching and Learning Consultant.

Shelley.howell@utsa.edu
(210) 458-6778
http://teaching.utsa.edu/

Resources:

- Syllabus Template (with links to UTSA services & policies)
- Syllabus Template (with UTSA services & policies full text)
- Course Syllabi Instructions
- 10 Tips for Transparent Syllabus Design Online Module
- Syllabus Design Online Module