



Best Practices for Course Syllabi Recommendations

Creating a college syllabus that is both clear and effective requires attention to structure, clarity, and comprehensiveness. A well-organized syllabus can guide students through the course, helping them understand expectations and stay on track. Here are best practice guidelines for creating a college syllabus as recommended by the CHC Academic Senate:

1. Course Information

- **Course Title and Number:** Include the full course name and any specific course codes.
- **Instructor Information:** List the name of the instructor, office hours, office location, phone number (if applicable), and email address.
- **Course Schedule:** Include the days and times the class meets, as well as the format (in-person, hybrid, online).
- **Course Location:** Indicate the classroom or online platform.

2. Course Description

- Provide a brief overview of the course and how it fits into the broader curriculum.
- Be clear about the scope of the subject matter.

3. Learning Outcomes

- List the course student learning objectives (SLOs), and the course objectives

4. Required Materials

- **Textbooks:** Include the title, author, edition, and any other required readings.
- **Technology/Software:** List any software, online platforms, or tools students must use.
- **Supplies:** Specify any materials, such as notebooks, lab equipment, or supplies required for the course.

5. Course Format and Expectations

- Describe the general format of the course (lectures, discussions, group work, labs, etc.).
- Clarify the expectations for attendance, participation, and interaction (especially in virtual environments).



- Note the expected level of preparation (e.g., reading, assignments) and how students should engage in class.

6. Grading Policy

- Provide detailed information on how students will be graded, including:
 - **Grading Scale:** Percentage ranges or letter grades (e.g., A = 90-100%, B = 80-89%).
 - **Assignment Breakdown:** List the percentage each component contributes to the final grade (e.g., Exams = 40%, Participation = 10%, Homework = 30%, etc.).
 - **Late Work:** Clarify policies regarding late submissions or make-up work.
 - **Regrading Policy:** If applicable, include the process for requesting a grade review.
- Emphasize any specific grading rubrics or standards used.

7. Course Schedule/Topics

- Provide a weekly outline of topics, readings, assignments, and important dates (e.g., exams, projects).
- Ensure the schedule is flexible enough to allow adjustments but firm enough to set expectations.

8. Assignments and Exams

- **Description of Assignments:** Provide clear details on each assignment's format, length, and expectations.
- **Exam Policies:** Clarify any information about exam formats (open book, in-class, online) and any specific rules (e.g., ID requirements, time limits).
- **Feedback:** Explain how students will receive feedback on assignments and exams.
- **AI:** provide clarification on how AI can or cannot be used

9. Student Support and Resources

- **Office Hours:** Reinforce how students can access support from the instructor.
- **Tutoring and Writing Centers:** Mention any academic support services available, such as writing help or tutoring.
- **Counseling Services:** Include contact information for counseling or mental health services if available.
- **Technology Support:** Offer guidance on how students can access technical support for online learning or digital resources.



10. College Policies

- **Academic Integrity:** Highlight policies on cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty.
- **Accessibility Services:** Include information on accommodations for students with disabilities, including how to request accommodations.
- **Student Code of Conduct:** Mention general classroom behavior and institutional policies regarding integrity, respect, and professionalism.
- **Attendance Policy:** Specify how absences will be handled, particularly in cases of illness or emergencies.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Affirm the importance of an inclusive and respectful learning environment.

11. Communication Expectations

- **Preferred Communication Method:** Specify the primary way students should contact you (email, office hours, etc.) and expected response time.
- **Announcements and Updates:** Indicate how students should stay updated on course changes (e.g., course website, emails, etc.).

12. Classroom Etiquette

- **Behavioral Expectations:** Set clear expectations about respectful behavior, including online conduct if the course is conducted in a hybrid or online format.
- **Use of Technology:** Clarify policies on cell phones, laptops, or other devices during class (e.g., allowed for note-taking, but not for social media).

13. Contingency Plan (for emergencies or disruptions)

- Provide guidance on how the course will proceed in case of unforeseen disruptions (e.g., illness, weather, or pandemics).
- Discuss how lectures and assignments will continue if the class moves online or there are changes to the schedule.

14. Important Dates

- **Drop/Add Deadline:** Include the deadline for students to drop the course without penalty.
 - **Final Exam Date:** Ensure the final exam time and date are clearly marked.
 - **Holiday/Break Dates:** List any days the course will not meet due to university holidays or breaks.
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Tips for Creating a Clear and Engaging Syllabus:

- **Be Concise, but Detailed:** Ensure your syllabus is informative without overwhelming students. Avoid unnecessary jargon.
- **Use Clear Language:** Avoid complex or ambiguous phrasing. Make the syllabus accessible to all students, including first-years.
- **Visually Organized:** Use headings, bullet points, and bold text to make the syllabus easy to navigate.
- **Be Flexible, but Firm:** Be clear about policies while allowing for some flexibility when needed (e.g., deadlines due to extenuating circumstances).
- **Be Transparent:** Make sure students fully understand the expectations, grading methods, and available resources.

By following these best practices, you can create a syllabus that sets students up for success and ensures clarity throughout the semester.