THE SYLLABUS WORKSHOP

TEACHING RENEWAL WEEK

JANUARY 10, 2018
PART I:
PURPOSE AND COMPONENTS

Jennifer Fellabaum-Toston
Assistant Teaching Professor
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
WHAT IS A SYLLABUS?

“A syllabus is most simply defined as a concise outline of a course of study. But it is also the students’ introduction to the course, the subject matter, and you.”

(Nilson, 2016, p. 61)

“…contains the information students need in order to understand what the course is all about, where you are trying to go with the course, and how it is going to operate.”

(Fink, 2013, p. 159)
DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES ON THE PURPOSE OF A SYLLABUS
(AS DISCUSSED IN NILSON, 2016)

Course handbook, or a ‘learning-centered syllabus’ (Grunert’s perspective)

“Friendly contract” that outlines “the mutual responsibilities of students and instructors” (p. 62; perspectives of Habanek; Palmer, Bach, & Streifer; Slattery & Carlson)

Putting policies and rules in an appendix, away from the “important information about course content, schedule, and assignment basics” (p. 63; Schuman’s perspective)

Inviting students to co-create the course and syllabus (Singham’s perspective)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical components:</th>
<th>An online/hybrid course might also include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course title (dept/course number info)/Course name</td>
<td>A communication strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General management info (your contact info; office hours)</td>
<td>Clear description of the time frame and format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course description and objectives</td>
<td>Guidelines for online class participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation plan (assignment descriptions)</td>
<td>Technical requirements and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading scale and procedures</td>
<td>Detailed course outline with start and end dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required readings and any recommended/optional readings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course/university policies (e.g., attendance, late work, academic integrity, ADA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course outline/Structure and sequence of course activities, including due dates</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>for major assignments, tests, and projects</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Nilson (2016) recommends a caveat/disclaimer – syllabus is subject to change…*
MU RESOURCES ON SYLLABI

ET@MO – Sample Syllabus and Syllabus Review

Disability Center Recommended Syllabus Statement

Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Sample Syllabus Statements

Office of the Provost – syllabus statements on academic dishonesty, ADA, intellectual pluralism, and Executive Order #38 (recording or not)

Faculty Council, Academic Affairs Committee – Statement on Syllabi Statements (from March 7, 2016)
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Online Example – “Your instructor and fellow participants wish to foster a safe online learning environment. All opinions and experiences, no matter how different or controversial they may be perceived, must be respected in the tolerant spirit of academic discourse. You are encouraged to comment, question, or critique an *Idea* but you are not to attack an *individual*.”
SUPPORT AND POLICIES LINK ON CANVAS
PART II: DESIGN FOR YOUR LEARNERS – TONE, USABILITY, AND ACCESSIBILITY

Barbara Hammer
Director
Disability Center
WHO ARE YOUR LEARNERS?

- Racial/ethnic minorities (Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black)
  42% (nationally); 15.5% (MU)

- Non-resident foreign (for many, English is not primary language)
  5% (nationally); 6.8% (MU)


undergraduate students with disabilities (non-apparent disabilities: learning, ADHD, psychological, chronic health, cognitive, developmental; sensory disabilities; physical disabilities)

11% (nationally); 4% (MU)

AN “APPROACHABLE” SYLLABUS (TONE)

• “Warm” language versus “cold” language

• Invitations instead of commands

• Cooperative, welcoming language versus paternalistic language
AN ACCESSIBLE AND USABLE SYLLABUS

**Accessible:** can be used by individuals with visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, and neurological disabilities

**Usable:** What do students see first? How do they know what to do next? Can they follow your instructions? Can they get the software they need? Do you project an inclusive learning environment?
DESIGN: TONE

- Multiple means/multiple methods
- Clear and unambiguous
- Concise
- First person language; positive language
- Include recommended statements and/or include an inclusive learning statement or a civility statement
DESIGN: ACCESSIBILITY/USABILITY

• Hierarchical structure with headings (style sheet!)
• Sans serif font (12 – 14 font)
• Bulleted (or numbered) lists and paragraph breaks
• Sufficient spacing
• Columns
• Strong color contrast
• Captions and/or alt-text tags for images
• Digital and print version
I am committed to creating a course that is inclusive in its design. If you encounter barriers, please let me know immediately so that we can determine if there is a design adjustment that can be made or if an accommodation might be needed to overcome the limitations of the design. I am always happy to consider creative solutions as long as they do not compromise the intent of the assessment or learning activity. You are also welcome to contact the Disability Center to begin this conversation or to establish accommodations for this or other courses. I welcome feedback that will assist me in improving the usability and experience for all students.
USEFUL RESOURCES

http://accessiblesyllabus.tulane.edu/

https://www.colorado.edu/accessibility/resources/universally-designed-syllabus-materials

https://accessibility.umn.edu/instructors/accessible-syllabus

PART III: SYLLABI AND COURSE DESIGN

DANNA WREN
DIRECTOR, EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES AT MISSOURI
ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY ANALYSIS
CONNECTING YOUR COURSE UPSTREAM

- Accreditation
- University principles/mission
- Program Objectives
- Course Objectives

Canvas Outcomes
CONNECTING YOUR COURSE DOWNSTREAM

Assessments
- Formative
- Summative

Assignments
- Authentic
- Problem based

Teaching strategies

Course objectives
# RUBRICS

## Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllabus</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Ratings</th>
<th>Pts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completeness of response to the assignment: Syllabus responds to all parts of the assignment as described in the course syllabus;</td>
<td>Full Marks 5.0 pts</td>
<td>No Marks 0.0 pts</td>
<td>/ 5.0 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and coherence: Syllabus is arranged in a logical manner and in a manner consistent with the proposed goals of your selected course</td>
<td>Full Marks 5.0 pts</td>
<td>No Marks 0.0 pts</td>
<td>/ 5.0 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains appropriate assignments and assessments for student centered learning</td>
<td>Full Marks 5.0 pts</td>
<td>No Marks 0.0 pts</td>
<td>/ 5.0 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate grammar, punctuation, and spelling: Standard English and spelling are consistently used (10 points). Any errors are minor and few. Style guide appropriate to one’s discipline is followed (for education students, APA 5th Edition must be used).</td>
<td>Full Marks 5.0 pts</td>
<td>No Marks 0.0 pts</td>
<td>/ 5.0 pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Points: 0 out of 20.0
QUESTIONS

• What sort of policies and processes does your academic unit follow?

• Are these made clear to your students via your syllabus or other documents?

• What are the things you want your students to know or be able to do when they finish your class?
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

• Third Party Homework/Tutorial sites
  • Study Blue
  • Course Hero

• Sharing/repurposing course content

• Respecting fellow students’ intellectual property
PART IV: TIME TO WORK

What seems to be the purpose of this syllabus?

How would you describe the tone?

What other components might they consider including?

Are there clear learning objectives and methods of assessing them?
PART V: ASSIGNMENTS AND SYLLABUS DESIGN

Amy Lannin
Director, Campus Writing Program
Associate Professor, English Education
ELEMENTS OF SYLLABUS DESIGN

• What assignments are used to help students reach the goals of the course?

• How are these assignments scaffolded, structured, organized?

• How should the assignments build on one another and be sequenced?

• How many opportunities for peer and instructor feedback should there be?
HOW MANY ASSIGNMENTS?

• Avoid overload for you and for students.

• Consider how much time students may need to complete an assignment and how many assignments will help them achieve the goals of your course.

• When possible, complete the assignment yourself to see what time may be needed.
BLENDING MAJOR AND MINOR ASSIGNMENTS

A range of assignments:

- Weekly one-page analysis
- Historiographical essay
- Historical narratives
- Screenplays
- Reflective essay
DISTRIBUTED GRADING

As you pace students through assignments, let your syllabus pace you through grading and assessment.

- First week, students complete and discuss informal writing and show some of their work.
- Second week, students present on their work in progress. Instructor and peers give feedback.
- Third week, students provide peer review. Instructor skims drafts by moving from group to group or by reading work posted in Canvas.
- Fourth week, work turned in. Instructor is already familiar with the work and grading can go more quickly (familiarity and previous feedback helped).
PART VI: MU LIBRARY RESOURCES

Joe Askins
Head of Instructional Services
University of Missouri Libraries
MEET YOUR SUBJECT LIBRARIAN

library.missouri.edu/contactus
MEET YOUR SUBJECT LIBRARIAN

Your subject librarian can help you:

• Discover and obtain books, journals, data sets, videos, audio recordings, equipment, and other resources for use in your course.

• Place physical and digital items (the library’s or yours) on course reserve.

• Navigate the murky waters of copyright and fair use.

• Integrate relevant information literacy concepts into your curriculum.

• Identify appropriate times and methods for information literacy instruction.

• Design assignments that assess a student’s grasp of those information literacy concepts.

• Develop online tutorials, instructional modules, and research guides.
SYLLABUS: SUBJECT LIBRARIAN’S NAME AND CONTACT INFO

• (Get the OK from your subject librarian first, of course.)

• If you mention a librarian by name, please make sure to share that syllabus with that person.

• If a librarian is “embedded” in your course, explain in your syllabus what his/her role is in the course.

• Subject librarians are now “mapped” to your course in MU Connect, allowing students to schedule one-on-one reference consultations quickly and easily.
CONSIDERING INFORMATION LITERACY DURING THE COURSE DESIGN PROCESS

• Identify information literacy skills and practices that students will need to develop in order to succeed in your course.

• Were they introduced to these concepts in a prerequisite course in their major? In gen-ed courses? In high school?

• If not, work with your subject librarian during the course design process (NOT after the semester begins) to figure out when and how to introduce information literacy concepts your students will need to complete their coursework.
INFORMATION LITERACY?

The old standards¹: *Six abilities of an information literate student*

1. Determine the extent of information needed
2. Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
3. Evaluate information and its sources critically
4. Incorporate selected information into one’s knowledge base
5. Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
6. Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally
INFORMATION LITERACY?

The new framework\(^2\): *Six concepts central to information literacy*

- Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process
- Information Has Value
- Research as Inquiry
- Scholarship as Conversation
- Searching as Strategic Exploration
SYLLABUS: YOUR INFORMATION LITERACY EXPECTATIONS

• If you expect students to already know how to use information resources, evaluate information sources, and/or reference sources using a specific citation style – and if you don’t intend on addressing these concepts further in your course – say so.

• Encourage students to contact their subject librarian schedule one-on-one consultations if they need assistance with the research process.
SYLLABUS: COURSE MATERIALS ON RESERVE AT THE LIBRARY

• Indicate which required, recommended, and/or optional course materials are held in reserve at the library.

• Whenever possible, include information about loan periods and restrictions for your course reserves. (E.g., “You can check this book out for two hours at a time, and a fee will be assessed for late returns.”)
PART VII: TIME TO WORK

How many assignments are included?

How are the tasks, such as the writing, supported?

What is the range of formal and informal writing/learning?

What type of feedback is included and how often?

How might you incorporate your subject librarian?

How might you address information literacy?
REFERENCES FOR PART 1


REFERENCES FOR PART VI
