Syllabus Design

Fall 2013

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Workshop Agenda

• Introductions
• Course Design
• Purpose of a Syllabus
• Syllabus Design
• Wrap-Up
Workshop Goals & Objectives

Goal:
• to learn about basic principles of syllabus design

Objectives
By the end of the workshop, you should be able to:
• understand the importance of “backward planning” for course/syllabus design.
• articulate the role you want the syllabus to play in your course.
• identify the essential elements you want your syllabus to include.
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• Wrap-Up
syllabus design

course design
The Course Planning Process

- Choose the book(s)/readings.
- Generate the syllabus.
- Design lectures and class activities.
- Create assignments.
- Prepare exams.
The Course Planning Process: Another Look

Choose the book(s)/readings

Formulate broad learning goals & specific learning objectives

Create assignments

Design lectures & classroom activities

Prepare exams
Planning Backward

**Identify desired results.**
What do I want my students to learn?

**Determine acceptable evidence.**
How will I know if they have learned it?

**Plan learning experiences and instruction.**
What learning activities will help them learn it?

Establish learning priorities

Worth Being Familiar With

Important to Know and Do

Enduring Understanding: Big Core Ideas & Core Tasks

Formulate broad learning goals & specific learning objectives

Choose the book(s)/readings

Create assignments

Design lectures & classroom activities

Prepare exams

Course syllabus
What might the learning priorities for your course be?
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What is the function of a syllabus?
What role(s) might it play in a course?
What role(s) do you want the syllabus to play in your course?
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What information do you look for in a syllabus?
Sample Syllabi

• Can you find the information you are looking for?

• What questions do you have?
Sample Syllabi

Life & Physical Sciences
• General Descriptive Chemistry I
• Advanced Organic Chemistry I
• Vertebrate Anatomy

Humanities & Social Sciences
• Archaeology & Paleoecology of Coastal & Island Environments
• The Complex Oedipus
What are the elements of an effective syllabus?
Qualities Most Appreciated by Students

- clarity
- conciseness
- consistency of formatting
- sound organization
- friendly but professional tone

Jeanette McDonald, Gillian Siddall, Deena Mandell & Sandy Hughes,
“Two Sides of the Same Coin: Student-Faculty Perspectives on the Course Syllabus”,
Basic Syllabus Headings

• Course information
• Instructor information
• Course description
• Course materials
• Assessment
• Expectations of students
• Academic support
• Course calendar/outline

Howard B. Altman & William E. Cashin, “Writing a Syllabus”
Syllabus Headings: Basic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course information</th>
<th>Instructor information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Course title</td>
<td>• Full name with title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Course number</td>
<td>• Office location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Credit hours</td>
<td>• Office hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting times</td>
<td>• Phone number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classroom location</td>
<td>• Email address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Website URL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Syllabus Headings: Course Description

- General content of course
- Instructional methods
- Prerequisites
- Course goals and objectives
Syllabus Headings: Course Materials

• Required materials
  • Where to buy/access them

• Recommended materials
  • Where to buy/access them
Syllabus Headings: Assessment

• Forms of assessment
  • Their link to course goals & objectives
• Grading
  • Relative weighting
  • How overall percentages translate into actual grades
Syllabus Headings: Expectations of Students

• Attendance and lateness
• Class participation
• Missed exams or assignments
• Lab safety/health
• Academic honesty
Syllabus Headings: Academic Support

• Disability Support
  “Please inform me if you have a disability or other condition that might require some modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, contact Students and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu.”

• Writing Center

• Science Center

• Tutoring

• Other?
Syllabus Headings: Course Calendar/Outline

• Daily/weekly schedule
• Due dates for major assignments
• Dates for quizzes, tests & exam
• Dates for required special events
“The research on teaching and learning is consistent: the more information you provide your students about the goals of a course, their responsibilities, and the criteria you will use to evaluate their performance, the more successful they will be as students and the more successful you will be as a teacher.”
Today’s Session: Learning Objectives Revisited

• What role do you want the syllabus to play in your course?
• How will you apply the principles of “backward planning” to your course/syllabus?
• What are the essential elements you want your syllabus to include?