



How to Design a Learner-Centered Syllabus¹ *(adapted for Trinity College by the CTL)*

The more explicit and transparent information we can provide our students about the course goals, their responsibilities, and the criteria we will use to assess their performance, the more likely it is that they will be successful as students and we will be successful as instructors. The syllabus serves as a central means to communicate such information.

Modified from Grunert O'Brian, Millis, & Cohen, 2008, The course syllabus.

This syllabus template has been designed to assist you in developing learner-centered syllabi. As you work with this template, consider the core elements (some required) and questions it presents. Feel free to modify so that the document most appropriately reflects the program, the course, and your approach to learning, teaching, and assessment.

Course Logistics

This section provides information about 1) course, 2) instructor, TA, peer facilitator, and 3) instructor personal information.

Contact Information

Enter instructor, co-instructor, TA and/or peer facilitator name and contact information, including office phone#, email address, office address, office hours, virtual office hours (Skype, Chat). Indicate whether instructor is available by appointment and the manner in which appointments may be made. Note reasonable expectations for students regarding response time to e-mail or other messages. If multi-section course, list the name and contact information of the course coordinator that students may direct their questions to.

Course Information

Course title, number, section, semester offered, days, times of course meetings and location. List any dates times of special sessions, field trips, other activities that are scheduled in place of/in addition to regularly scheduled class meetings. Note any prerequisites for student enrollment, special skills or knowledge for effectively meeting course requirements.

Provide a disability disclosure statement that invites students to contact you, such as: *Any student who has a need for accommodation/s based upon the impact of a disability should contact me as soon as possible. Contact the Office of Disabilities Support Services to coordinate appropriate accommodations.*

Instructor Information

You may share your interest, passion for the subject, teaching philosophy. You may introduce co-instructors and/or TAs and their expertise and contributions.

Program and Course Student Learning Outcomes

Course Description

¹ Gabriele Bauer, (April 2010) University of Delaware, Center for Teaching and Learning, "Designing a Learner-Centered Syllabus" retrieved June 16, 2010 from <http://cte.udel.edu/instructional-topics/designing-courses/designing-learning-centered-syllabus.html> and adapted by J. MacDonald for the Center for Teaching and Learning at Trinity College.

Indicate how the course fits within the program, its value added for the students, its content. You may indicate the course format, e.g., large lecture with discussion sections, seminar course, interdisciplinary, team-taught course.

Program Student Learning Outcomes (required field)

Indicate how the course learning outcomes align with the program outcomes and gen. ed. goals: what program and gen. ed. goals are addressed in the course? You may outline this alignment by listing each program and gen. ed. goal relevant to a particular course goal, providing a link to pertinent program and gen. ed. goals.

For example, *in this course students articulate their data collection process by writing lab reports [course learning goal] - contributes to students' ability to present written and oral reports of technical information clearly and concisely [program goal and gen. ed. goal of oral and written communication].*

Gen. Ed. goals: <http://www.trincoll.edu/AboutTrinity/mission/goals.htm>

Course Student Learning Outcomes (required field)

State the course learning outcomes, including knowledge, skills, and competencies to be achieved. Inform the students how the course contributes to their learning. Use concrete verbs (e.g., identify, compare, appraise, estimate, predict) to articulate student learning outcomes and make them observable and measurable. The learning outcomes guide the design of assessments and in- and out-of-class activities.

Sample learning outcomes:

- *Create interactive 3-D models of products using VRML.*
- *Use energy principles to determine the stress states of structures comprised of one-dimensional elements (beams, columns, and rods).*
- *Solve geometric problems concerning planes using vectors.*

Bloom revised: <http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/bloomsTaxonomy.html>

Assignments / Exams (required field)

Describe all academic requirements in the course, such as types of assignments, tests, exams, papers, projects, homework, quizzes, exhibits, presentations that students will complete and indicate how they help students achieve the intended learning outcomes. Indicate how each assignment contributes to the final course grade. List the dates when these requirements occur or assignments are due.

Grading / Course Policy

Grading Policy

State instructor grading policy, including the weight attached to all assignments/exams listed in the syllabus, including team work and class participation, if appropriate. Note how final grade is calculated and outline grade distribution. Set forth when/how students will receive feedback on their work and reasonable expectations about returning graded work.

Set forth instructor policy regarding attendance, missed assignments, late work, extra credit, posting to online discussions.

Outline instructor policy regarding participation in webinars, field trips or other activities that are scheduled in addition to/in place of regularly scheduled class meetings.

Course Policies

Outline policy pertaining to academic integrity, student safety (lab) and civility (use of cell phones, beepers). For example, *Eating and drinking are not allowed in the lab. Please do not bring any food or beverages into the lab. We will be working with hazardous materials throughout the semester. Eating or drinking during lab puts you and your classmates at increased risk of accident and injury from breakage or toxins. You will be asked to remove any food or beverage you bring into the lab. Please turn off your cell phones and pagers so that you can focus on the lab work at hand.*

Provide a statement about academic integrity, such as *All students must be honest and forthright in their academic studies. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an assignment, or to allow or assist another to commit these acts corrupts the educational process. Students are expected to do their own work and neither give nor receive unauthorized assistance. Any violation of this standard must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct [at Trinity, the office of the Dean of Students]:* <http://www.trincoll.edu/StudentLife/DeanOfStudents/AcademicPolicies.htm>

Be explicit about student responsibility in case of flu-like illness such as H1N1, for example: <http://www.trincoll.edu/parents/H1N1+Influenza.htm>

Teaching Methods and Materials

Describe the nature of instructional activities that will occur help students accomplish set learning outcomes. Indicate how interactions will be facilitated, such as teamwork, debates, interactive lecture, online discussions, blogs, use of Sakai, clickers. Outline the nature of interactions and students' responsibility in their learning: student-led discussions, presentations, peer feedback, self-assessment. Note whether you will collect student feedback for instructional enhancement purposes.

List all required readings, learning materials, instructional supplies, equipment that students are expected to use in the course and indicate where they may be obtained.

Note. According to the [Higher Education Opportunity Act](#), please indicate the following information for required and recommended textbooks and supplemental material: the ISBN, the retail price. If the ISBN is not available, please provide the author, the title, the publisher, and the copyright date (to take effect July 1, 2010).

Study Help

Describe how students can succeed in the course and offer study tips, resources, study guides, such as: *Guide to the readings - Keep an open mind. Listen to what the readings have to say. Think about what experiences you may have had and reading you have done that may corroborate the course readings. Give yourself time to reflect on the information offered in the readings. Take your time with the readings; allow yourself to enter into a kind of conversation with them.*

Outline how the instructor, the TA and/or peer instructor will work with students; e.g., facilitate study groups, conduct review sessions prior to exams. Include tips from former students who have been successful in the course.

Course Calendar

List the sequencing of content areas, respective readings, schedule of course activities for the entire semester. State dates, times when all academic requirements in the course need to be completed, submitted. Indicate dates for formative and summative student feedback, note drop- add dates, official holidays, breaks, and dates you will be away from campus.

Adapted from:

Altman & Cashin. (1992). *Writing a syllabus*. IDEA Paper No. 27. Kansas State University.

Grunert O'Brien, J., Millis, B., & Cohen, M. (2008). (Second edition). *The course syllabus. A learning-centered approach*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

More material on this topic and other topics can be found in the CTL Library located in the Mason Room at the Smith House.