



THE SYLLABUS

LTCC TEACHING & LEARNING



WHAT IS IT?

A syllabus is a document that contains all of the key items, foundations, and policies related to a class. Traditionally, a syllabus is provided to students on the first day of (or first opportunity in a DE) class. Many faculty call the syllabus a “boilerplate” document in that it indicates clearly to students what is to be expected in a class.

ETYMOLOGY

A concise table or list of headings of a discourse.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The syllabus is, perhaps, the single most significant document a student will receive in your class. Not only does the syllabus allow for student success as it indicates clearly what is to be expected in a given class, it protects the faculty member who may experience a grade dispute after a class is taught. Many in the academic world consider the syllabus to be a “contract” for all of the parties involved in a class—the student, instructor, and the institution.



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VARIATION

Due to the obvious differences in the subjects that we teach, syllabi vary from one instructor to another. If you teach a class in a lab space that has clear safety implications, your syllabus would reflect this dynamic. Likewise, if you teach a writing-intensive class, you will emphasize plagiarism and related issues more in that class than in, say, a mathematics course. Even with this variation, we will note, later, some of the core areas or foundations that should be a part of all syllabi.

SYLLABUS AS A (LEGAL) CONTRACT

It is impossible to overstate the legal/contractual values of a syllabus. In short, if there is a grade dispute related to your class, you need to be sure that you have put in place all of the necessary foundations that detail things like grades, late work, assignment requirements (for example, paper formatting, page length, etc.), and many other related areas. If a class and its instructor is challenged by a student and that same class lacks clarity in terms of these areas, the likelihood of the grade appeal being voted in favor of the student is much higher. A syllabus is about due diligence in terms of our professional and disciplinary standards.

ISP, F2F, DE COURSES

Typically, ISP courses have their course syllabi built-in to the course or module content. If you have any questions, reach out to your department chair, dean, or the ISP Office for more information about the ISP syllabus. If you teach a F2F course, you will typically provide a paper copy of the syllabus on the first day of a class. In a DE course, the syllabus is a dedicated tab and may, depending on your preference, be set up as the front or home page in the Canvas course.

POLICIES

It is recommended that you include as many possible policies in your syllabus as you see fit. Part of this Syllabus Project is to provide you some pre-set snippets of text that you can immediately incorporate in your F2F or DE class syllabus. The more the better is true in terms of including policies on your syllabus. If a policy is not listed, one could argue that the situation or circumstance is not covered in terms of the legal or contractual requirements of the document (though we could argue that some general areas, like public safety and student behavior, are covered under aspects of BP, AP, College Catalog, and other official LTCC documents and policies).



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EXTENSIVE OR BRIEF SYLLABUS?

There are differing opinions as to whether a long or short syllabus is more effective for students. While a long syllabus could be considered dry or overburdensome, a short syllabus could equate with a lack of necessary foundations and policies. In such a scenario, a grade dispute could result in a favorable finding for a student—even if the student has no case—due to the lack of inclusion of policies like plagiarism, late work, and others in the syllabus.

WILL STUDENTS READ IT?

A challenge of any class is getting students to read the course syllabus. We have all encountered situations in which a student says, “I didn’t know the due date,” to which we may have responded, “It’s on the syllabus...did you read it?” Many instructors use the first day of a F2F class to go over the syllabus. Some DE instructors create a syllabus video that highlights similar points that one would cover in a F2F explanation of the syllabus on the first day. One idea is to create a syllabus quiz (F2F or DE) or a Module Prerequisite or Requirement (DE) to be sure that students have read the syllabus. Whatever your approach, we would suggest that you cannot spend too much time or stress too much the information in terms of the syllabus. In short, it is vital to student success in the class.

MINIMUM FOUNDATIONS

Here are some minimum elements to include in a syllabus:

Name and Pertinent Course Information // Instructor Address // Instructor Contact/Preferred Contact Method // Meeting Information // SLOs and Course Objectives // Course Texts or Readings // Grading // Campus Resources (such as Library, DRC, etc.) // Disability or Learning Accommodations // Policies // Calendar Safety and Evacuations (F2F class)

REAL, USEABLE RESOURCES

Please go to <https://ltcc Teaching and Learning.com/syllabus> to download syllabus snippets, policies, and other useful resources. You may also read some interesting online articles and studies related to the syllabus. Good luck!