

**Syllabus Construction**

*by Jessica Riviere, Danielle Picard, and Richard Coble*

**

A syllabus serves many functions in a class. In *The Course Syllabus: A Learning Centered Approach* (2008, 2nd Ed.) Judith Grunert O’Brien, Barbara J. Millis and Margaret W. Cohen identify at least sixteen elements of a learner-centered syllabus:

* Establishes an early point of contact and connection between student and instructor
* Helps set the tone for the course
* Describes your beliefs about educational purposes
* Acquaints students with the logistics of the course
* Contains collected handouts
* Defines student responsibilities for successful coursework
* Describes active learning
* Helps students assess their readiness for your course
* Sets the course in a broader context for learning
* Provides a conceptual framework
* Describes available learning resources
* Communicates the role of technology in the course
* Can provide difficult-to-obtain reading material
* Can improve the effectiveness of student note taking
* Can include material that supports learning outside the classroom
* Can serve as a learning contract.

Writing a document that serves all these purposes can be a challenge! Fortunately, there are many resources to help you, including this teaching guide.

**First: a good syllabus relies on thoughtful course design.**

The strongest syllabi are built on a solid foundation of [course design](http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/course-design/). In course design, the instructor first chooses learning goals that are appropriate for the level of the class and the students in it. These are goals that can be achieved in one semester, and that are rooted in the discipline. After selecting learning goals for the class, the instructor decides how to measure whether students have achieved those goals, and then decides what learning experiences in and outside of class will help students practice what they should learn, that can be achieved in one semester, and that are rooted in the discipline. The syllabus provides the students an introduction to this unified design and also is valuable evidence of a reflective teaching practice to colleagues, including  review or search committees.

**What does a syllabus contain?**

On any given syllabus, you can find similar, standard information. Barbara Gross Davis lists 12 categories of elements that are common on what she refers to as a “comprehensive course syllabus” (Tools for Teaching p 21-36, 2009).  What follows is a condensed list of these categories. A chart based on Gross Davis’s chapter can be found [here](https://s3.amazonaws.com/vu-wp0/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/2014/04/05110457/Tools-For-Teaching.pdf), courtesy of the University of California, Berkeley. Cornell University’s Center for Teaching Excellence has another [explanation of the comprehensive syllabus](http://www.cte.cornell.edu/teaching-ideas/designing-your-course/writing-a-syllabus.html), with a useful [template](http://www.cte.cornell.edu/documents/Syllabus%20Template.doc) .  First listed are categories that are often seen as a given, the backbone of most syllabuses:

* **Basic Information**: Instructor’s name, contact information, and office hours; title of the course, location, and times
* **Course Description:** Prerequisites, overview of the course, student learning objectives
* **Materials:** Primary/required books and readings, including other lab equipment, software, or art supplies ([Vanderbilt bookstore](https://www.facultyenlight.com/?storeNbr=8021)) ([Library Reserves](http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/services/placingreserves.php))
* **Requirements:** Exams, quizzes, assignments, problem sets, reports, etc.
* **Policies:** Grading procedure, [attendance](http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/2011/03/from-a-students-view-fair-attendence-policies/), class participation, missed exams or assignments, late policies, standards for [academic honesty](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system/#honor-code-violations)
* **Schedule:** Tentative calendar of topics, firm dates for exams and assignments ([final exam calendar](http://registrar.vanderbilt.edu/calendar/exams/)), last day for [withdrawing from course](http://registrar.vanderbilt.edu/registration/registration-information/#course-drop) or switching to [pass/fail status](http://registrar.vanderbilt.edu/registration/registration-information/#pass-fail)

Although basic, many of these categories can be expanded to be very detailed.  Many of the elements in this basic information will change for every class taught, even if just by updating the dates to reflect a new semester’s calendar.

In addition to these specifics for a particular class, there are elements worth including whose language might stay the same or similar for many classes you teach. These include:

* **Resources**: What else can students use, besides the information above, to be successful in this class? This might include tips for success, model student assignments, glossaries of technical terms, links to support materials on the web, academic support [on campus](https://as.vanderbilt.edu/academics/undergraduate-academics.php), and even space for students to identify two or three classmates to contact if they miss class or want to form a study group.
* **Statement on Accommodation**: Many schools have standard language to describe [accommodation for physical, medical, or learning disabilities](http://vanderbilt.edu/ead/ds_students.html). Additional options to consider: reasonable accommodations for religious beliefs and observations, conflicts due to participation in athletics or upcoming interviews. (For an example from the University of Northern Colorado, click [here](http://www.unco.edu/cebs/diversity/syllabus_diversity.html).)
* **Evaluation of the course and assessment of student learning**: It can be valuable to inform students about how you will be gathering feedback during the semester, in addition to end-of-semester evaluation procedures. Some examples are in the table below. [(CfT resources on Assessment and Reflection)](http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-guides/reflecting-and-assessing/)
* **Rights and Responsibilities**: Provide details on students’ and instructors’ rights to academic freedom as well as principles of community. [(Vanderbilt Community Creed)](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/)
* **Safety and Emergency Preparedness**: What to do in case of fire, tornado, accident or injury, or other emergency, procedures for inclement weather, evacuation procedures, lab safety precautions. [(VU Emergency Guides)](http://emergency.vanderbilt.edu/vu/quick-ref-guides/)
* **Disclaimer**: In a guide from Hamilton College's Center for Teaching Excellence on writing a [legally sound syllabus,](http://provost.hamptonu.edu/cte/legally_sound_syllabi.cfm) the general counsel recommends including a disclaimer about possible changes to the class. Her example is: "This syllabus is intended to give the student guidance in what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the professor reserves the right to modify, supplement and make changes as the course needs arise."

While some of these elements have been decried as “legalese” contributing to “syllabus bloat,” proponents of the “comprehensive syllabus” argue that greater and more detailed resources being available to students saves the instructor time when questions arise. (Paula Wasley, “The Syllabus Becomes a Repository of Legalese” March 14, 2008, <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Syllabus-Becomes-a/17723/>) A study of syllabus components in 350 syllabuses from seven different Carnegie categories revealed that by and large, faculty include very little in terms of policy information for students (Doolittle and Lusk 2007). They recommend faculty include policies as appropriate, so that students are aware of resources available to them. More detailed examples can be found below.

**How can the tone of the syllabus affect learners?**

This discussion leads us to the consideration of tone in a syllabus. The syllabus is the first introduction students receive to you as an instructor and to the content of the course. Researchers at James Madison University surveyed student responses to detailed and brief versions of the same syllabus, and concluded that students associated the detailed syllabus with qualities of a master teacher (Saville et al 2010). Researchers have explored the effect of “warm” and “cold” language in a syllabus on student perceptions of the instructor. An example of “warm” language in a syllabus is “I hope you actively participate in this course. I say this because I found it is the best way to engage you in learning the material (and it makes lectures more fun.)” “Cold” language, on the other hand, expresses the same idea using different words: “Come prepared to actively participate in this course. This is the best way to engage you in learning the material (and it makes the lectures more interesting.)” Students who read the syllabus with the “warm” language rated the hypothetical instructor both more approachable and more motivated to teach the class (Harnish and Bridges 2011). Assistant Director Nancy Chick has written previously about the disconnect between what is written in the syllabus and what she wants her classroom to be like: (<http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/2014/01/whats-in-your-syllabus/>).

**What are examples of policies and resources I can use?**

As mentioned above, syllabi can contain a variety of information that helps orient students to the class or to resources the university offers to help students. The following areas are frequently considered:

**Ability and Disability**

Students of all abilities and backgrounds want classrooms that are inclusive and convey respect. For those students with disabilities, the classroom setting may present certain challenges that need accommodation and consideration. A statement in your syllabus inviting students with disabilities to meet with you privately is a good step in starting a conversation with those students who need accommodations and feel comfortable approaching you about their needs. Please also see our [teaching guide on Teaching Students with Disabilities.](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/disabilities/)

You may want to include the following components:

* Let students know times they can meet you to discuss the accommodations and how soon they should do so.
* Contact information for the Disability Services Office, or your university’s equivalent.
* How does ability diversity play a role in how the class is conducted or the content discussed?
* How might students come talk to you about accommodations or make you aware of situations they want (or need) to disclose? (See our teaching guide on [Teaching Students with Disabilities](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/disabilities/) for more information on disclosure and student privacy).

**Sample Statements:**

* This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. If appropriate, also contact the Vanderbilt Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services Department (EAD) to get more information about specific accommodations.
* The Department of Spanish and Portuguese is committed to making educational opportunities available to all students. In order for its faculty members to properly address the needs of students who have disabilities, it is necessary that those students approach their instructors as soon as the semester starts, preferably on the first day of class. They should bring an official letter from the Vanderbilt Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services Department (EAD) explaining their specific needs so that their instructors are aware of them early on and can make the appropriate arrangements.
* If you have a learning or physical disability, or if you learn best utilizing a particular method, please discuss with me how I can best accommodate your learning needs. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all learning styles. However, I can only do this successfully if you discuss your needs with me in advance of the quizzes, papers, and notebooks. I will maintain the confidentiality of your learning needs. If appropriate, you should contact the Vanderbilt Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services Department (EAD) to get more information on accommodating disabilities.

**Academic Integrity**

As the Center for Teaching Guide on [Cheating and Plagiarism](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/cheating-plagiarism/) states, “Although students can be expected to know about cheating and plagiarism in the abstract, they’re not always clear on what they can and can’t do in particular courses and on particular assignments. It’s a good idea to spell that out for your students in your syllabus.” In other words, your students are already subject to the guidelines of the honor code in enrolling in your class. Providing an outline and a reminder of what this means for your course can aid students in fulfilling these obligations.

You may want to include the following components:

1. A link or url to the [university’s honor code](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system/#statement-of-the-honor-code) along with a summary or quotation from it.
2. An outline or description of what constitutes plagiarism or a violation of the honor code, as well as a brief description of the penalty for violating it.
3. Descriptions of the writing center, library resources, and the honor system for students to access campus resources that will help them avoid violating the honor code.

**Sample Statements:**

Vanderbilt University provides the following [Faculty Checklist of Recommended Practices](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/academicintegrity/faculty/resources/):

* Put a statement of the application of the Honor Code on your syllabus.
* Sample syllabus statements:
	+ “Vanderbilt’s Honor Code governs all work in this course (e.g., tests, papers, and homework assignments).”
	+ “All academic work at Vanderbilt is done under the Honor System.”
	+ Also provide helpful details for your course, such as permissible and impermissible behaviors:
		- Students may collaborate on homework, but not . . .
		- Rough drafts must include proper citations . . .
		- You are permitted and encouraged to discuss the answers to the suggested problems with other students, TAs, and faculty

Providing a more descriptive example, [Derek Bruff](http://derekbruff.org), Director of the Center for Teaching and Senior Lecturer in Mathematics, cites the honor policy and outlines resources to avoid plagiarism in a concise statement on academic integrity in his [syllabus](http://derekbruff.org/blogs/fywscrypto/files/2010/08/Course-Info-_2_1.pdf) on cryptography:

**Academic Integrity**

Please familiarize yourself with Vanderbilt’s [undergraduate honor policy](https://studentorg.vanderbilt.edu/honorcouncil/). I’m encouraging a lot of sharing and collaboration in this course, but your work on your essay assignments should be your own. Please be careful not to plagiarize. The [Undergraduate Honor Council](https://studentorg.vanderbilt.edu/honorcouncil/2015/11/16/university-honor-council/) has a very helpful guide to understanding plagiarism, and the Writing Studio has a great set of resources on [working with sources in academic writing](http://vanderbilt.edu/writing/resources/handouts/). We’ll spend some class time exploring plagiarism and academic integrity more generally.

If your life is falling apart and you are tempted to plagiarize to save time or get a good grade, please see me instead. I would rather grant you an extension than send you before the Honor Council for plagiarism—but I will send you to the Honor Council if it comes to that.

[Andy Van Schaack](http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/bio/andrew-vanschaack), assistant professor in Vanderbilt’s Department of Human Organization and Development, provides a much more detailed example in his syllabus on “[Systemic Inquiry](http://andrewvs.blogs.com/files/hod1700-s11-syllabus.pdf).” The statement covers a full page of single-spaced type and can be found on the fourth page of the syllabus, immediately following the class’s assignments. In addition, he closes a list of student expectations immediately preceding the class schedule with this concise statement:

**Honesty and Integrity**
This is absolutely the wrong class to cheat in. I work very hard to ensure that all students are provided the same opportunity to succeed. The penalty at Vanderbilt for cheating is severe—it is not worth it.

**Acknowledgements**

As [Katherine Harris](http://www.sjsu.edu/people/katherine.harris/) writes in a helpful [blog post](https://triproftri.wordpress.com/2012/03/08/acknowledgments-on-syllabi/) on syllabuses, "[Acknowledgement sections] act as a citation and is a marker of the intellectual rigor and scholarly communication that’s inherent to the construction of any syllabus, assignment, or rubric.” In other words, the acknowledgements section allows you to give credit for the contributions of other instructors, classes, or programs from which you are drawing in designing your course. With this section, an instructor will not only mirror the proper academic integrity that we hope to teach our students, she can also provide links, urls, or other citations to the work of other scholars, allowing students who are interested to know more about the origins of the class and the work of its sources.

You may want to include the following components:

1. Either an acknowledgements section at the end of your syllabus naming the instructors or classes you are drawing on in constructing your syllabus or footnotes under specific items, like a midterm assignment, that names where it originates.
2. Links on a digital syllabus, urls on a paper syllabus, or traditional citations so that students can follow your sources.

**Sample Statements:**

For an example of an acknowledgements section on an online syllabus citing the course design of another instructor, see this section from [Rob MacDougall](http://history.uwo.ca/People/Faculty/macdougall.html)’s syllabus “Digital History” for the University of Western Ontario:

* Acknowledgements: This course was originally designed and has been taught since 2007 by my colleague [William J. Turkel](https://williamjturkel.net/teaching/). I have followed his syllabus closely. I have borrowed liberally (right down to the color scheme of this site) from other Digital History courses as well, as taught by [Jeremy Boggs](http://clioweb.org/), [Amanda French](http://amandafrench.net/), [Jo Guldi](http://www.joguldi.com/), [Mills Kelly](http://edwired.org/), [Jeffrey McClurken](http://mcclurken.org/), [Paula Petrik](http://www.archiva.net/), [William Thomas](http://cdrh.unl.edu/about/faculty/thomas.php), [Ethan Watrall](http://www.captainprimate.com/), and others. Trailblazers all!

 [Notes: Students can then click on these links embedded in the names MacDougall cites in order to view the work and contributions of these figures.]

For an example of an acknowledgement on a paper syllabus for language taken from another source in various statements on a syllabus, see this [section](https://jeremyfprice.gitbooks.io/educ6811-syllabus/content/acknowledgements.html) from [Jeremy Price](https://www.gitbook.com/%40jeremyfprice)’s syllabus “[Learning Communities in the Digital Age](https://www.gitbook.com/book/jeremyfprice/educ6811-syllabus/details)” for Fairmont State University:

* Acknowledgements**:**I have adapted the ideas and language from the work of several educators for this syllabus, and I appreciate their contributions to this syllabus. The language concerning Universal Learning is courtesy of the "Accessibility Statements on Syllabuses" on the ProfHacker blog (<http://bit.ly/1bAXeDN>). The language concerning the respective responsibilities of professor and students is courtesy of Dr. Terry Murray of the State University of New York at New Paltz. Language concerning definitions of Teaching for Understanding terms is from the [Harvard Graduate School of Education website.](https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/08/05/what-teaching-understanding)  The Unit Maps are based on the graphic organizer in the Teaching for Understanding Guide by Tina Blythe and Associates. All comics panels are from *Rhymes with Orange* by Hilary Price ([http://rhymeswithorange.com](http://rhymeswithorange.com/)).

[Notes: Though students will not be able to click on these links directly if the syllabus is in paper form, they can still access the contributions named in the section when they are provided with urls or other citations.]

If you would like to make a quick acknowledgement that you are re-using an assignment designed by another instructor, you can simply add a footnote after the title of the assignment on the syllabus:

Midterm: Pastoral Listening Exercise1

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. This midterm assignment is adapted from Prof. Bonnie Miller-McLemore’s course “Introduction to Pastoral Theology and Care,” taught at Vanderbilt University in the Fall Semester of 2014.

Though students will not be able to access the work of this professor, she is still properly given credit for her contribution to the syllabus.

**Focusing on Assessment for Learning**

In their 2011 article in the Journal of College Science Teaching, Ludwig, Bentz, and Fynewever emphasize the role of the syllabus in preparing students: “Your Syllabus Should Set the Stage for Assessment for Learning.” They describe three levels of information for students to use to assess learning as it happens:

**Specific learning objectives**.  Their example for the first chapter of a General Chemistry includes

**The student will be able to**

* given written or graphic descriptions, distinguish between pure substances, heterogeneous mixtures, and solutions.
* given a temperature in one scale, convert between temperature scales (°C, °F, K)
* given conversion factors, perform dimensional conversions of any kind.

**Feedback mechanisms to students**, posed as questions to help students learn to reflect on their learning. This reflection can be immediate, or it can take place over the course of the semester. Here are a few excerpts:

* Online Homework: Have you submitted and resubmitted the homework until it is mastered (a perfect score)? These problems were chosen because they match the course objectives.
* Clicker Questions and think-pair-share discussions: During a given class period, we will have about three clicker questions. Often these questions will be followed by a discussion with your nearest neighbor. Are you doing well on these questions? Can you explain your thinking clearly to your neighbor?
* Self-reflection: Look over the list of learning objectives for the chapter that we are studying. Are you confident that you are proficient at these objectives? Your confidence is a good (but not perfect) predictor of your achievement.

**Feedback mechanisms to instructor**, which are sometimes the same as those for the student, such as clicker questions, think-pair-share activities, and minute papers, in addition to homework and written work. Contextualizing these activities as feedback opportunities for the instructor on the effectiveness of their teaching adds another dimension to student perception of them. Here is some of the language Fynewever uses in his syllabus:

**How will I know if my teaching is helping you read the learning objectives?**

* Clicker questions: After you answer the clicker questions, we will see a histogram displaying what percentage of students made each choice. If there’s clearly disagreement, then I’ll know that we need to spend more time on this topic.
* Think-pair-share and small group discussions: While you are talking with your neighbor or in small groups I will circulate amongst the class and “spy” on you. If it sounds like there’s a lot of divergent ideas or uncertainty, then we will discuss your thoughts together as a class.

**Civility**

We all hope for students in our classes to grant one another respect and dignity, even when discussing challenging subjects regarding, for example, sexual/gendered inequality. To help support this approach, below is sample text focused on gender and sexuality drafted by Vanderbilt’s [Project Safe](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/projectsafe/) for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response. You may choose to incorporate other subject matter into your syllabus statement or encourage broad values of civility and mutual respect. If you would like to discuss with a consultant, please contact the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching.

**Sample Statement:**

In this course we may discuss a variety of sexually explicit and/or violent behaviors, practices, and viewpoints on those behaviors and practices, some of which are controversial. Our readings and discussions will provide you the opportunity to develop a language for and comfort level with discussing a full range of topics related to gendered and sexual violence in the classroom in a respectful and articulate way. In this course, the aim of our inquiry is critical understanding. No student will be expected to reveal or discuss their own sexual experiences, preferences, or desires. You will be expected to participate in our class discussions in a way that is respectful of others. If you do not feel comfortable hearing about, viewing, and discussing gender-based violence, sex and sexualities in a frank and respectful way, you may wish to reconsider your intention to take the course.

**Including Language about Emergency Preparedness in a Course Syllabus**

You may be interested in including information in your course syllabus regarding emergency preparedness on campus.  Here are several potential approaches:

* Vanderbilt University offers several web-based guides to emergency preparedness, including a guidebook available for download. Consider providing students with a link to Vanderbilt’s comprehensive [downloadable pdf guide](https://emergency.vanderbilt.edu/vu/quick-ref-guides/dec2016-pdfguidebook.pdf) in the electronic version of the syllabus.  The guide includes information about what to do in a range of situations, from thunderstorms to active shooter situations.
* Create a one-page document with safety and emergency essentials relevant to your campus location and discipline, and include it in your syllabus. To do so, cut and paste desired sections from the [downloadable pdf guide](https://emergency.vanderbilt.edu/vu/quick-ref-guides/dec2016-pdfguidebook.pdf). You may want to include information on what to do in case of a chemical spill if your class will be interacting with chemicals, for example, or evacuation guidelines specific to your location. [Here](https://campusadvisories.gwu.edu/sites/campusadvisories.gwu.edu/files/downloads/2016-2017%20Syllabus%20Insert.pdf) is an example of a one-page emergency preparedness pdf offered to instructors at George Washington University as a syllabus insert.
* You may wish to simply use this brief blurb with essential emergency information:

*“The safety of students, faculty, and staff at Vanderbilt University is of the utmost importance. As a Vanderbilt student, you are automatically enrolled in* [*AlertVU*](https://emergency.vanderbilt.edu/alertvu/index.php)*, which is used in emergencies which pose an imminent threat to the community.  If you need to contact the Vanderbilt Police in an emergency, call 911 from any campus phone or (615) 421-1911 from any other phone. Additional information about emergency preparedness is available* [*online*](https://emergency.vanderbilt.edu/guides.php)*.*

**Explicit Content (with the trigger warning)**

If your course involves discussion of gender-based violence or abuse, you might want to provide a trigger warning to your students on your syllabus. The following sample text was drafted by Vanderbilt’s Project Safe for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response. Contact [Project Safe](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/projectsafe/) for more information.

**Sample statement:**

This course and course materials may involve the use of explicit language, including descriptions and examples of sexual situations, violent and abusive behaviors, to discuss gender-based violence and forms of abuse. The situations and behaviors examined will include physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect.

Participating in class discussions, reading course materials, and completing course assignments may remind you of experiences that you, a friend, or family member may have gone through. If you need support and/or would like to talk to someone about questions or concerns relating to power-based personal violence, please contact the Project Safe 24-hour hotline at (615) 322-SAFE (7233) or visit the [Project Safe website](https://www.vanderbilt.edu//projectsafe/) in order to learn more about on and off-campus resources.  Project Safe is a confidential (limited) resource; other confidential resources on campus include the Psychological and Counseling Center, Student Health, and the University chaplains.

Reports may be made to and assistance is also available through Vanderbilt’s [Title IX](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/) Coordinator (615-322-4705) and [VUPolice Department](https://police.vanderbilt.edu/).  A non-campus local resource, the Nashville Sexual Assault Center also offers a 24-hour hotline: 1-800-879-1999.  Many resources are available; please see instructor for further assistance.

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) for Digital Learning**

Instructors are increasingly including online, web-based, and public digital assignments including Web publishing, blogging, and social media participation. The reasons for doing so are many: Intellectual interaction among fellow students or even the general public; building digital literacy and responsible digital citizenship; and creating electronic portfolios of academic work; among others. All course assignments must protect student’s privacy rights under the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html) (FERPA also known as the Buckley Amendment; [see here for Vanderbilt’s FERPA guidelines](http://registrar.vanderbilt.edu/ferpa/)). Under FERPA regulations, instructors cannot, without permission, disclose student’s personal information, grades, or course enrollments. It is the issue of course enrollment that is particularly tricky with publicly available online assignments.

FERPA may be violated if students are forced to publically contribute to online websites like blogs or discussion boards, if grades are left where others (including their classmates) can see them, or if student grades are sent via email. You may choose to consider having a FERPA statement in your syllabus if you intend to have an online component to your course (beyond Blackboard/Canvas/D2L -- at Vanderbilt, course management systems like Blackboard, Canvas, and D2L are considered secure for posting grades. See the [Vanderbilt Registrar's website](http://registrar.vanderbilt.edu/ferpa/) for more Vanderbilt specific information).

There are some easy measures you can put into place to protect your students rights when it comes to digital projects.

**Recommendations:**

1. Make participation requirements in online assignments very clear in the syllabus at the start of term. Not only will this set participation policies, it allows students to choose to enroll or unenroll in course with full knowledge of course requirements. You may take their continued enrollment as consent regarding your policies.
2. Encourage students to manage their own privacy settings. Giving students the choice of when to use an “alias” and when to publish under their given name not only gives them control of their personal information, it provides an exercise in digital citizenship and literacy.
3. If full participation under a given name is a necessary component of the assignment, have students sign [this consent form](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/Consent-for-Online-Participation.pdf). Using this consent form isn’t required (see point 1 above), but it’s a good practice.

**Sample Statements:**

* The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law designated to protect the privacy of a student’s education records and academic work. All files, records, and academic work completed within this course are considered educational records and are protected under FERPA. In this course, we will be working with third party applications online (i.e. wikis, blogs, and social media applications like Twitter). It will be your responsibility to read the privacy documentation at each site. You will be allowed to use a pseudonym/alias in order to maintain your privacy as long as you notify me of that username. The online component is required as part of this course. I will take your continued enrollment in this course as consent regarding this policy. If you still have concerns, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss your options.
* As part of this course, you will be required to post to a course blog weekly in order to engage in current political discourse. This blog is publically available on the internet and may be viewed by persons around the world who are not enrolled in this course. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), you may choose to limit what information you share, including your real name and other personally identifying characteristics. Please sign the attached [consent form](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/Consent-for-Online-Participation.pdf) acknowledging that you have read and consent to this policy.

**Title IX Statement**

Title IX prohibits all forms of gender-based discrimination, including sexual assault and harassment, in federally funded education programs. Title IX reads: “**[N]o person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”**

Title IX applies to academic programs and extends to sponsored off-campus programs. Though a private institution, Vanderbilt receives federal monies to support financial aid packages.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can call the Project Safe 24-hour crisis/support hotline at 615-322-7233 and you can find a list of resources at [Project Safe](http://www.Vanderbilt.edu/projectsafe). You may also contact the University’s [Title IX](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/) Coordinator (615-322-4705).

**Inclusivity and Diversity in the Classroom**

Classroom inclusivity is an umbrella term denoting that the classroom environment will be respectful of differences in background and identity between students and the instructor, including differences in race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and class. An inclusive classroom does not mean that differences are ignored, but rather that students can expect that they will not be excluded, stereotyped, or judged based on their differences. In addition, an inclusive classroom will mean that students have space to bring their various identities into conversation with class material as they find helpful, but are not expected to represent or speak for an entire group of people who share aspects of an identity.  The following statements are meant to convey expectations for a classroom environment as well as student and teacher expectations that help to create an inclusive classroom.

You may want to include the following components:

* A statement declaring that the class will respect differences in background and identity as well as an exact description of what that respect will look like from day to day.
* A link to the [Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/equity-diversity-inclusion/) or other official campus offices and statements outlining the institution’s commitment to inclusivity.
* Links to [Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/ead/), the [Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Life](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lgbtqi/), the [Black Cultural Center](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/bcc/), the [Women’s Center](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/WomensCenter/), and other services that may offer support for students from historical minority groups on campus.

**Examples:**

The [Feminist Pedagogy CFT Guide](https://my.vanderbilt.edu/femped/) provides links to the following helpful examples:

California State University’s [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](https://www.csuchico.edu/diversity/index.shtml) provides the following three statements ([along with statements on inclusion/diversity particular to academic disciplines](http://www.csuchico.edu/diversity/resources/teaching/syllabi-examples.shtml)). Taken together, they provide the most detailed and thorough syllabus statement on inclusion of the three examples offered here.

**Diversity Statement**

Respect: Students in this class are encouraged to speak up and participate during class meetings. Because the class will represent a diversity of individual beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences, every member of this class must show respect for every other member of this class.

**Safe Zone Statement**

I am part of the Safe Zone Ally community network of trained Chico State faculty/staff/students who are available to listen and support you in a safe and confidential manner. As a Safe Zone Ally, I can help you connect with resources on campus to address problems you may face that interfere with your academic and social success on campus as it relates to issues surrounding sexual orientation/gender identity. My goal is to help you be successful and to maintain a safe and equitable campus

**LGBTQ Equality Statement**

I am firmly committed to diversity and equality in all areas of campus life, including specifically members of the LGBTQ community. In this class I will work to promote an anti-discriminatory environment where everyone feels safe and welcome. I recognize that discrimination can be direct or indirect and take place at both institutional and personal levels. I believe that such discrimination is unacceptable and I am committed to providing equality of opportunity for all by eliminating any and all discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimization. The success of this policy relies on the support and understanding of everyone in this class. We all have a responsibility not to be offensive to each other, or to participate in, or condone harassment or discrimination of any kind.

The University of Northern Colorado’s [Diversity and Equality Committee](http://www.unco.edu/education-behavioral-sciences/about-us/diversity-equity/resources.aspx) offers a more concise but descriptive statement of the inclusive learning environment:

**Inclusivity Statement:**The College of Education and Behavioral Sciences (CEBS) supports an inclusive learning environment where diversity and individual differences are understood, respected, appreciated, and recognized as a source of strength. We expect that students, faculty, administrators and staff within CEBS will respect differences and demonstrate diligence in understanding how other peoples' perspectives, behaviors, and worldviews may be different from their own.

Please visit the [CEBS Diversity and Equity Committee website](http://www.unco.edu/education-behavioral-sciences/about-us/diversity-equity/) for more information on our commitment to diversity.

West Virginia University’s [Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](https://diversity.wvu.edu/) provides a statement that links classroom inclusion to its accommodations statement. It is the most concise and therefore least descriptive of these examples.

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the [Office of Accessibility Services](https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/)...For more information on West Virginia University’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see [http://diversity.wvu.edu/](http://diversity.wvu.edu/ddei)."

**Mental Health and Wellness**

**Sample Statement:**

I understand that as a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug concerns, depression, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These stressful moments can impact academic performance or reduce your ability to engage. Vanderbilt’s Student Care Network offers services to assist you with addressing these or any other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are experiencing any challenges, you are encouraged to reach out for support. The Office of Student Care Coordination (OSCC) is the central and first point of contact to help students navigate and connect to appropriate resources on and off-campus, develop a plan of action, and provide ongoing support. You can schedule an appointment with the OSCC [here](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/carecoordination/) or call 615- 343-WELL.

The Student Care Network also offers drop-in services on campus on a regular basis. You can find a calendar of services [here](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/studentcarenetwork/satellite-services/).

If you or someone you know needs to speak with a professional counselor immediately, the University Counseling Center offers Crisis Care Counseling during the summer and academic year. Students may come directly to the UCC and be seen by the clinician on call, or may call the UCC at (615) 322-2571 to speak with a clinician. You can find additional information [here](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/ucc/).

**Layout and Graphic Presentation**

“It is easy to dismiss design – to relegate it to mere ornament, the prettifying of places and objects to disguise their banality. But that is a serious misunderstanding of what design is and why it matters.” ---**Daniel Pink**

Linda Nilson’s 2007 book *The Graphic Syllabus and the Outcomes Map: Communicating your course* is a detailed resource for thinking about the visual impact of the layout of your syllabus. How the syllabus looks  affects our students’ perceptions of the class and of us as instructors. It also helps students learn to organize their knowledge in meaningful ways. "Visuals communicate the structure and interrelationship among the topics to be covered and the abilities students will acquire. [...] They can also be designed to communicate an instructor's approachability, sense of humor, and caring for the students." (13)  With more and more syllabuses being available online, there are fewer restrictions on using images due to the cost of printing in color. We could even include links to relevant videos to explain our expectations.  Something as simple as separating the calendar of readings into visually distinct and meaningful thematic groups can help students organize their learning over the course of the semester.

Other professors have shared their attempts to apply Nilson's principles. For example, in 2010 Billie Hara shared visuals from her syllabuses, which categorize visually the kinds of learning objectives her students will achieve.



Here is one example from a philosophy course by  Mark Smillie at Carroll College (Helena, MT) which illustrates Nilson's suggestion that the layout of the syllabus can suggest "competition and complementarity" among elements of the course:

The weeks are numbered to the left, and the readings are organized visually into meaningful groups. This helps students construct a model for schools of philosophy which all answer the same question ("Philosophy: What is it, why do it?") but have distinguishing characteristics from one another.



Ultimately, it is important to remember that visuals in a syllabus serve as a model and guide for the students as they navigate the content and requirements of the course.

**Learning Environment**

The learning environment in the classroom or laboratory is guided by norms and rules of discussion, whether or not these are clearly articulated and set by the syllabus. A statement on learning environment expectations will help students understand how to engage the class, instructor, and one another in a way that best promotes respect, critical thought, and learning. An instructor may want to include statements on how to participate in open discussions, how to articulate and substantiate an argument, and how to handle disagreements.

You may want to include the following components:

* Concise statements of what the students should expect from the instructor and from one another as they each contribute to the classroom’s learning environment.
* A description or list of norms and behaviors that best facilitate an open and respectful classroom environment (e.g. critique ideas, not people; do not interrupt, etc.).
* An explicit connection between classroom inclusivity and learning environment expectations.

**Sample Statements:**

The “[Classroom Climate Guidelines](http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/aiseminars/cedi/cediclas/)” at Carleton College in Northfield, MN gives a bulleted list of classroom expectations across the university.

The Carleton Classroom, Studio, and Laboratory are therefore:

* Spaces in which faculty, staff, and students strive to create positive atmospheres that value the diversity, backgrounds, and perspectives of all members of our communities.
* Spaces for discussion and experimentation with ideas and opinions where students, staff, and faculty interact in a variety of ways. Together, we present information, work in groups on problems or projects, build and criticize arguments and opinions, and develop creativity and critical thinking.
* Spaces in which individuals should feel at liberty to express their considered views on relevant materials and issues, to challenge their fellow students and instructors to explain or refine views, and to ask questions when they need clarification or further explanation.  At the same time, these are spaces where they should be prepared to be challenged by others in the service of the learning process.
* Spaces in which generalities, labels, assumptions, and stereotypes may be identified, interrogated, and challenged,  and ideas, interpretations, and hypotheses will be proposed, refined, and criticized.  Challenging ideas and opinions respectfully does not constitute a form of disrespect but is an aspect of the learning process.
* Spaces in which individuals treat themselves, their classmates, and their instructors with respect and consideration in what they say and the manner in which they say it so as to foster a productive learning environment.

See also “[Sample Civility Statements](https://www.mtholyoke.edu/sites/default/files/teachinglearninginitiatives/docs/civilitysamples.pdf)” from the [Teaching and Learning Initiatives](https://www.mtholyoke.edu/teachinglearninginitiatives) at Mount Holyoke College.

These “[Guidelines for Class Participation](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p4_1)” by the [Center for Research on Learning and Teaching](http://www.crlt.umich.edu) at the University of Michigan provide another list, but it is more succinct than the first one above:

1. Respect others’ rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own. Challenge or criticize the idea, not the person.
2. Listen carefully to what others are saying even when you disagree with what is being said. Comments that you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker’s comments.
3. Be courteous. Don’t interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
4. Support your statements. Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points.
5. Allow everyone the chance to talk. If you have much to say, try to hold back a bit; if you are hesitant to speak, look for opportunities to contribute to the discussion.
6. If you are offended by something or think someone else might be, speak up and don't leave it for someone else to have to respond to it.

Finally, for an example that mixes pointed lists of expectations with more descriptive paragraphs about how the classroom environment contributes to the goals of the class, see [Nancy Chick](https://nancychick.wordpress.com)’s syllabus statement in the link below, also found in the [Feminist Pedagogy CFT Guide](https://my.vanderbilt.edu/femped/):



**Mandatory Reporting**

All faculty, many staff, and some students are “mandatory reporters” who are legally obligated to report any allegations of sexual misconduct (assault, harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking and child abuse) and any suspected discrimination (about age, race, color, cree, religion, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, sex/gender, sexual orientation, disability, genetic information, military status, familial status or other protected categories under local, state or federal law) to Vanderbilt’s [Title IX](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/) Coordinator (615-322-4705). This means that students who discuss such things with their peers and faculty do not have confidentiality.  Students should be aware of that fact so they, both have choice about reporting, and options for other, confidential resources on campus. The following is sample text to help explain this to students, as drafted by Vanderbilt’s Project Safe for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response. [Project Safe](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/projectsafe/) for more information.

**Sample Statement:**

University faculty, many staff member, and some student leaders are required to report incidents of sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and child abuse, as well as any suspected discrimination (about age, race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, sex/gender, sexual orientation, disability, genetic information, military status, familial status or other protected categories under local, state or federal law) to the University’s [Title IX](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/) Coordinator (615-322-4705), as required by University policy and state and federal law. If you disclose an experience of interpersonal violence and/or child abuse to classmates with mandatory reporting obligations or to the instructor, whether in class discussion or through a course assignment, your disclosure will be kept as private as possible but may not be able to be kept confidential.

Please consult with your instructor with any questions before sharing a personal experience of intimate partner violence or that of another Vanderbilt-affiliated person. If you disclose thoughts of harm to self or others, that information will also be disclosed to relevant parties charged with ensuring the health and safety of our campus community.

**Personal Electronic Devices**

Computers, tablets, cell phones and other electronic devices can be useful tools in the classroom when used properly, but they can also be a source of distraction. Some instructors

See our teaching guide on [Wireless in the Classroom](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/wireless/) for more information.

You may want to include the following components:

* A description of how laptops will be integrated into your classroom activities. Laptops may make sense in some classes more than others. If your class is largely discussion-based, then it may be appropriate to adopt a policy that limits the use of laptops in class. If your class varies in format from one meeting to the next, you may want to define 'laptop' vs 'non-laptop' days.
* Information on the types of content, resources, and tools students can use during glass. For instance, if readings and other course content are made available through Blackboard or Box, you may want your students to be able to bring them up during class. The same might be said for courses that require students to use particular software like SPSS or Excel.

**Sample Statements:**

* As part of this course, you will be asked to vote on "clicker questions" using your laptop, tablet, or cell phone at least twice per class. I expect that you use these technologies only for course-related purposes while in the classroom. If you find your cellphone distracting, you can put it away between questions. If you have an emergency where you need to answer your phone, please exit the classroom to do so.
* This course requires you to be a mindful and courteous participant during in-class discussions. Therefore, laptops and cellphones are not allowed except in the following situations: fact-checking, referencing required readings, and finding relevant resources to aid in our understanding of the course content (such as YouTube clips or recent newspaper articles). If I find that you are abusing this policy, I will ask you to turn off the device. Repeated infractions will lower your participation grade.

**Personal Pronoun Preference**

Students in your classroom may prefer to be referred to with pronouns that are different from the ones that accord with their biological sex assigned at birth. The Center for Teaching’s [Teaching Beyond the Gender Binary in the University Classroom](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-beyond-the-gender-binary-in-the-university-classroom/) Guide provides a comprehensive introduction as well as a range of resources for classroom practices inclusive of gender nonconforming and transgender students. You should not assume that your classroom does not have gender nonconforming students in it. A good way to ensure that your class will be inclusive of all gender identities is to include a statement on pronoun preferences in your syllabus.

You may want to include the following components:

* A statement explaining that the instructor and the class will respect the pronoun choices of each individual class member
* A list of your own pronoun preferences following your name on the syllabus: “Dr. Richard Coble (*he, him, his*)”
* A supplemental [pronoun etiquette sheet](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/Pronoun-Etiquette-Sheet.pdf) or [pronoun guide](https://vanderbilt.box.com/shared/static/68zho68z1y16co3axrzko98tdpgjz3y1.pdf) explaining how to use pronouns respectfully and to correct for mistakes
* A link to the [Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/equity-diversity-inclusion/) or other official campus offices and statements outlining the institution’s commitment to inclusivity
* A link to the [Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Life](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lgbtqi/), and other services that may offer support for gender nonconforming students and others around issues of gender identity in and outside of the classroom

**Sample Statements:**

The University of Colorado Boulder’s [Gender and Sexuality Center](http://www.colorado.edu/gsc/) provides a concise statement on inclusivity, ending with a request to make pronoun preferences known to the instructor:

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Austin College’s [Johnson Center for Faculty Development and Excellence in Teaching](http://www.austincollege.edu/academics/centers-and-college-wide-programs/johnson-center/) gives the following example statement in a PowerPoint presentation on [Safe Space for LGBTQ Students](http://www.austincollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/LGBTQ-in-the-Classroom.pptx). It is more descriptive about name and pronoun preferences, providing some rationale and examples:

All humans have the right to be addressed in accordance with their personal identity.  Sometimes this means you’d prefer me to call you “Jim” rather than “James.”  Sometimes this means that though your given name might be “Helen,” you identify as male and would prefer to go by a different name and a masculine pronoun.  In all cases, students’ preferences of address will be honored.  If you have reason to believe that I may refer to you by the incorrect pronoun (“s/he”), please let me know how you would prefer to be addressed (she, he, they, ze, etc.) right away.

Finally, the University of Pittsburgh’s [Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Program](http://gsws.pitt.edu) provides the following suggested [syllabus statement](http://gsws.pitt.edu/faculty/gender-inclusivenon-sexist-language-syllabi-statement). This statement is more abstract but also comprehensive in its presentation of how gender pronouns and preferences function in classroom inclusivity and exclusivity:

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women’s experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

**Promising Syllabus**

Ken Bain describes the commonalities across syllabuses from college teachers across the country who consistently inspired their students to learn deeply.

*Trust, rejection of power, and setting standards that represented authentic goals rather than schoolwork are apparent in the kind of syllabus the best teachers tended to use. This "promising syllabus," as we dubbed it, had three major parts. First, the instructor would* ***lay out the promises or opportunities*** *that the course offered to students. What kinds of questions would it help students answer? What kind of intellectual, physical, emotional, or social abilities would it help them develop? That section represented an invitation to a feast, giving students a strong sense of control over whether they accepted. Second, the teacher would explain* ***what the students would be doing to realize those promises*** *(formerly known as requirements), avoiding the language of demands, and again giving the students a sense of control over their own education. The would decide to pursue the goals on their own, without taking the course, but if they decided to stay in the class, they needed to do certain things to achieve. Third, the syllabus summarized* ***how the instructor and the students would understand the nature and progress of their learning****. This was far more than an exposition of grading policies; it was the beginning of a dialogue in which both students and instructors explored how they would understand learning, so they could both make adjustments as they went and evaluate the nature of learning by the end of the term.*

*-- Ken Bain, What the Best College Teachers Do, 74-75. [Emphasis Added]*

Christine Courtade Hirsch, Assistant Professor of Communication at SUNY Oswego, changed her syllabus after attending a workshop with Ken Bain.  Overall she had a  very positive experience. Importantly, she reminds her readers in her written reflections on the experience that the course has to be in line with the promises articulated in the syllabus. She recommends six strategies for implementing the values of the promising syllabus into the communications classroom over the course of the semester:

1. Emphasize the different focus of the course;

2. Offer a foundational vocabulary,

3. Facilitate learning through careful listening in discussion and developing grading rubrics with students,

4. Be prepared to let students make decisions,

5. Ask a question for which you do not have answers,

6. Require a major project that allows students to illustrate what they know. (Hirsch 2010).

To read more about it, and see part of Hirsch's syllabus, you can read her article in *Communication Teacher* vol. 24 (2010) 78-90.

**Sexual Misconduct**

Faculty may wish to include statements on their syllabi that provide links and resources to campus services. For any course, but especially those that may touch on issues of sexual and gender, you might want to include a statement on sexual misconduct. The following is sample text to help guide students, as drafted by Vanderbilt’s Project Safe for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response. Contact [Project Safe](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/projectsafe/) for more information.

**Sample Statement:**

Vanderbilt is committed to providing a community built on trust and mutual respect, where all can feel secure and free from harassment. Sexual misconduct including sexual violence, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and stalking, violates a person’s rights, dignity and integrity and is contrary to our community principles and the mission of the college. The University is committed to fostering a community that promotes prompt reporting of sexual misconduct and timely and fair resolution of sexual misconduct reports. Creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment is the responsibility of everyone at Vanderbilt.

We encourage all members of our campus community to seek support from the [Project Safe Center](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/projectsafe/); 615-322-7233. We encourage community members to report all incidents of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct directly to the [Title IX](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/) Coordinator (615-322-4705).  Staff in these departments will assist in eliminating the misconduct, preventing its recurrence, and addressing its effects.

**More Samples from different disciplines**

This [Profhacker post](http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/creative-approaches-to-the-syllabus/35621) has links to creative syllabus formats from many disciplines,.

U Mich Center for Research on Teaching and Learning: sample syllabuses for sections and labs – useful for graduate instructors! <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/tssd>

[Syllabus tips](https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/designing-your-course) from Harvard’s Derek Bok Center.

**Where can I learn more?**

University of Minnesota’s Center for Teaching and learning has produced a syllabus writing tutorial. If you want to walk through with someone step-by-step, this is a great place to do it online. <http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/syllabus/index.html>

Also, the Center for Teaching offers Syllabus Consults to Faculty and Graduate Students on campus. Make an appointment and come by and see us!

**References**

Bain, Ken. (2004). *What the Best College Teachers Do.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

Doolittle, Peter and Danielle L. Lusk. (2007).  "The Effects of Institutional Classification and Gender on Faculty Inclusion of Syllabus Components." *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,* 7, 62-78.

Drake, P. (2014). Is your use of social media FERPA compliant? EDUCAUSE Review, 49:1. Retrieved from <http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/your-use-social-media-ferpa-compliant>

Gross Davis, Barbara. (2009)."The Comprehensive Course Syllabus." *Tools for Teaching, 2nd Ed.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 21-36.

Grunert O'Brien, Judith, Barbara J. Millis and Margaret W. Cohen. (2008). *The Course Syllabus: A Learning-Centered Approach*, *2nd Ed.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hara, Billie. (2010). "Graphic Display of Student Learning Outcomes." *Profhacker*. http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/graphic-display-of-student-learning-objectives/27863

Harnisch, Richard J. and K. Robert Bridges. (2011).  "Effect of Syllabus Tone: Students' Perceptions of Instructor and Course." *Social Psychology Education*, 14, 319-330.

Hirsch, Christine Courtade. (2010). "The Promising Syllabus Enacted: One Teacher's Experience." *Communication Teacher*, 24, 78-90.

Ludwig, Matthew A., Amy Bentz, and Herb Fynewever. (2011). "Your Syllabus Should Set the Stage for Assessment for Learning." *Journal of College Science Teaching* 40, 20-23.

Nilson, Linda B. (2007). *The Graphic Syllabus and the Outcomes Map: Communicating Your Course.* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Saville, Bryan K., Tracy E. Zinn, Allison R. Brown, and Kimberly A. Marchuk. (2010). "Syllabus Detail and Students' Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness." *Teaching of Psychology*, 37:3, 186-189.

Wasley, Paula. (2008). "The Syllabus Becomes a Repository of Legalese." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. http://chronicle.com ; Section: The Faculty 54:27, A1.

(Syllabuses vs Syllabi: <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=2684>)

**Cite this Guide**

Riviere, J., Picard, D. R., & Coble, R. (2016) *Syllabus Design Guide*. Retrieved [todaysdate] from http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/syllabus-design/

Mark Smillie at Carroll College (Helena, MT) example

Mark Smillie at Carroll College (Helena, MT) example

**Acknowledgements**

Photo Credit: [ici et ailleurs](http://www.flickr.com/photos/7550732%40N07/3717800842/) via [Compfight](http://compfight.com) [cc](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/)

1 This guide was originally written by Jessica Riviere, Senior Graduate Teaching Fellow 2013-2014. It was updated in 2016 by Danielle Picard (Senior Graduate Teaching Fellow 2015-2016) and Richard Coble (Graduate Teaching Fellow 2015-2016) to include more examples of language instructors may want to use in their syllabuses.



Content on this site is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).