TIPSHEET

DEVELOPING COURSE SYLLABI

Essential information

Course syllabi vary widely in length, format, content, and style. However, all course syllabi should incorporate the following key information:

Administrative details
- Course name, number and designator (e.g. ENG 100F – Effective Writing)
- Your name and contact information (e.g. office location and office hours, course web site address, email address) [Note: instructors are not required to provide their home phone number to students but may do so at their own discretion]
- TA name and contact information (as applicable)

Course description
- A brief paragraph describing the focus and goals of the course
- Requirements for the course (e.g. pre-requisites, language requirements)
- Indicate whether the course is a pre-requisite for upper level courses

Required texts or readings
- Provide the details of any required texts for the course, including where students can obtain copies
- Indicate if any of the course readings have been placed on short term loan
- You may also wish to include additional recommended readings
- Indicate what material is also (or exclusively) available on the course web site (if applicable)

Course work and grading

Instructors should provide a clear breakdown of the work required in the course, including due dates and assignment weights. In addition, instructors should provide an overview of each assignment and its assessment criteria. (This information can be included in the course syllabi or provided in more detail on a separate handout.)

Key dates and deadlines

This may be included under course work and grading portion or in the week-by-week breakdown (see below), or you might remind students in a separate section. You can also include information about required outings or events

Course/departmental/divisional policies
- Instructors may wish to outline departmental, divisional, or their own policies regarding:
  - expectations for participation and attendance
  - deadlines for assignment submissions
  - submission methods (e.g. in person or electronically through Turnitin.com)
  - extensions or penalties for late work
  - email response time
  - academic integrity / plagiarism

1

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Copyright in Instructional Settings
If a student wishes to tape-record, photograph, video-record or otherwise reproduce lecture presentations, course notes or other similar materials provided by instructors, he or she must obtain the instructor's written consent beforehand. Otherwise all such reproduction is an infringement of copyright and is absolutely prohibited. In the case of private use by students with disabilities, the instructor's consent will not be unreasonably withheld.

Support and accommodation
Note any relevant academic and personal support services (for example, the writing centres, counseling services, study centres, etc.) and include a statement that reminds students who require accommodation for a disability to register with accessibility services.

Week-by-week breakdown of in-class activities
Instructors may wish to provide a weekly breakdown of the material to be covered in class (and in tutorials, if applicable). Required and recommended readings may also be highlighted.

Using your syllabus as a learning tool
Your syllabus can be an important source of information about the course material and about learning in your field. You can develop a syllabus that describes:
- Course goals and outcomes. This might include an outline of the disciplinary content and skills that students will learn through the course, but might also address broader skills or topics (e.g. research methodology) that may contribute or draw on other courses or fields of study.
- Key topics and the ways in which they are connected and prioritized. This can even be presented graphically: See Nilson, L. (2007). *The graphic syllabus and the outcomes map: Communicating your course*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- The ways in which information is organized, evaluated, and debated in your field. For example, you might provide a brief overview or background to the study of the topic itself (for example, when it emerged as a field or study, different ways in which it has been researched and taught), some history of the course (for example, new topics or sections that have been added or eliminated, new teaching methods or elements of course), or some information about how to perform scholarly work in the discipline (for example, and introduction on how to read particular kinds of texts or sources or how to use and interact with the course material).

Together, these elements create what is often referred to as a "learner-centred" syllabus. For more tips on using your syllabus as a learning tool, see: Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Iowa State University. (1998). Learning centered syllabi workshop. Retrieved from http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/syllabi.html.

Options for additional information
You might also want to include some or all of these additional pieces of information to help your students prepare for the course:
- A description of your expectations for course activities (for example, for participation, preparation, workload or time spent on assignments, requesting additional feedback)
- Any additional supplies, materials, or equipment that are required or might help students succeed in the course
- Responses to "Frequently Asked Questions" about the course or the course material
- Your teaching philosophy statement or other information about your interest in the topic

Sample statements for your course syllabi

The following statements may be included on your course outline. For assistance in drafting additional statements, please feel free to contact the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation at ctsi.teaching@utoronto.ca.

On Academic Integrity:
Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (http://www.governingcouncil. utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm) outlines the behaviours that

constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:
- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:
- Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
- Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test.
- Misrepresenting your identity.

In academic work:
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesfor students.html).

On Turnitin.com:
Turnitin.com is a tool that will assist in detecting textual similarities between compared works. Students must be informed at the start of the course that the instructor will be using Turnitin.com. The course syllabus must include the following statement (as is):

"Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site".

For more information on Turnitin.com, please contact Ryan Green, Educational Technology Liaison, CTSI, at 416-946-7729 or Saira Mall, Educational Technology Liaison, CTSI, at 416-946-8661.

On Accommodation:
The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs.

For more information on services and resources available to instructors and students, please contact Tanya Lewis, Director, Academic Skills and Accessibility Services at 416-978-6786; tanya.lewis@utoronto.ca.

Additional resources

Altman, H. B., & Cashin, W.E. (1992). Writing a Syllabus. *Idea Paper 27*. Manhattan: Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development, Kansas State University. Retrieved from http://www.idea.ksu.edu/papers/Idea_Paper_27.pdf

Calhoon, S., Becker, A. (2008) "How students use the course syllabus." *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 2 (1), 1-12.

Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Minnesota. (2008). Online syllabus tutorial. Retrieved from http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/syllabus/index.html.

Davis, B.G. (1993). Creating a syllabus. In *Tools for Teaching*. San Franciso: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/syllabus.html

Educational Development Office, Wilfred Laurier University. (n.d.). Course syllabi. Retrieved from http://www.wlu.ca/page.php?grp_id=333&p=8505.
A series of links to resources on syllabus development.

Pregent, R. (1994) *Charting our course: How to prepare to teach more effectively*. Madison, WI: Magna Publications Inc.

Richlin, L. (2006) Blueprint for learning: Constructing college courses to facilitate, assess and document learning. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publications.

Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, Brown University. (n.d.). Electronic syllabus workshop. Retrieved from http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan_Center/teaching/syllabus.html.
Examples of course syllabi with comments from educational developers.