LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- After this interactive presentation, you will be able to:
  - Compare and contrast a content-focused and a learner-centered syllabus
  - Identity ways to create a learner-centered syllabus
  - Apply what you learn to develop a plan to create a learner-centered syllabus
Focus Activity

- Take 1-minute to reflect on the following questions (#1 on handout):
  - What is the purpose of a syllabus?
  - What are differences between a content-focused and a learner-centered syllabus?
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A SYLLABUS?

- To outline a course
- To provide basic course information
- To provide a list of readings, class meeting times, and grading procedures
- To become an interactive learning tool (Nilson, 2016)
- To encourage students to become co-learners (Slattery & Carlson, 2015)
**CONTENT VS. LEARNING-FOCUSED SYLLABI**

- Content-focused syllabi focus on dry course descriptions, use mechanical and robotic language, and have a calendar that only includes due dates and course readings.
- Content-focused syllabi focuses on what the “course will do”

- Learning-focused syllabi are characterized by engaging course descriptions; clear and measurable learning objectives; alignment between objectives and assessment activities; transparent and meaningful assessment activities; positive and inviting tone; and a detailed and interactive course calendar.
- Instructors focus on what “students will learn” and how the course will be structured to support learning.
- Instructors invite students to become co-learners.
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

For example, consider the following course description she used in a syllabus years ago:

Econ102 is an introduction to microeconomic analyses and policies. Microeconomic deals with the behavior of individuals and firms and how the behavior is influenced by government policy. The principal objective of the course is to enable students to analyze major microeconomic issues, clearly and critically.

Now compare that to the description she uses now:

Why should you want to study microeconomics? Alfred Marshall defined economics as the study of people in the ordinary business of life. Every choice you make, from what time to get up ... whether or not to go to class ... how long to study, or work, or how much to eat, or where to go on Thursday nights ... ALL of it incorporates microeconomic principles. Microeconomics helps us to understand how people and firms make choices, how markets are organized, why and how markets behave differently, and the effects government interventions have in market outcomes. I LOVE this course, and I am hoping that by the end of the semester you will develop a deep appreciation for the subject.

“A lot of times I feel that students think that a course happens at them and they’re not truly engaged and a part of the learning experience,” Paff said. “If the syllabus is
Students who read a learner-centered syllabus might be:

- More motivated before they enter the classroom (Harnish & Bridges, 2011)
- Have better perceptions of the syllabus, the course, and the instructor (Palmer, 2016)
- Use the syllabus as an interactive learning tool throughout the course (Palmer, 2016)

A student who read a learner-centered syllabus stated, “I like how they emphasize the realistic aspects of learning and participating, rather than simply laying out the work to be done.”
COMPONENTS OF A LEARNER-CENTERED SYLLABUS

▪ (1) Learning Goals and Objectives
▪ (2) Assessment Activities
▪ (3) Course Schedule
▪ (4) Overall Learning Environment
In a learner-centered syllabus, learning objectives are a central element of the course and are:

- Clearly articulated with action verbs (e.g., analyze, connect, apply) to describe what students will know, value, or do
- Aligned with Bloom’s and/or Fink’s taxonomy of learning dimensions
- Included in a specific section
- Aligned with assessment activities
# ALIGNMENT BETWEEN OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES</strong></th>
<th><strong>FINNK’S TAXONOMY OF SIGNIFICANT LEARNING</strong></th>
<th><strong>ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After participating in this course, you should be to <strong>explain</strong> and give <strong>examples</strong> of quantitative and qualitative research methods.</td>
<td>FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>LEARNING ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES: EXIT REPORTS; MID-TERM EXAMINATION; FINAL EXAMINATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After participating in this course, you should be to <strong>apply</strong> what you learned about quantitative and qualitative research methods to <strong>prepare</strong> a research proposal.</td>
<td>APPLICATION</td>
<td>RESEARCH PROPOSAL DRAFT; RESEARCH PROPOSAL REPORT; POSTER DEMONSTRATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After participating in this course, you should be able to <strong>reflect</strong> and <strong>develop</strong> a learning plan to learn more about how to use research to influence the counseling profession.</td>
<td>LEARNING HOW TO LEARN</td>
<td>LEARNING ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE: WHAT? SO WHAT? NOW WHAT? JOURNAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In a learner-centered syllabus, assessment activities can:

- Connect with learning objectives
- Include a description (e.g., purpose, task)
- Include evaluation procedures (e.g., rubric, criteria for success)
TRANSPARENT ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY: PURPOSE

- **Purpose:** One of the learning objectives of this course is for you to demonstrate understanding and knowledge of quantitative and/or qualitative research designs. Another learning objective is to identify how to critique research to inform counseling practice. The purpose of this assignment is to prepare a research proposal on a counseling-related topic using a quantitative and/or qualitative research design. I want you to review counseling research and prepare a quantitative or qualitative proposal that can advance knowledge in the counseling profession. As a future school or clinical mental health counselor, you might be asked to prepare evaluation reports, write a grant, or prepare a research-based presentation. This assignment will help you practice and develop skills necessary to produce a research or grant report.
(3) COURSE SCHEDULE OR CALENDAR

- In a learner-centered syllabus, a course schedule:
  - Provides a list of readings, class meeting dates, or assessment due dates.
  - Provides additional information to guide and help students prepare for each class session.
  - Requires students to interact with syllabus to stay updated with important readings as well as themes or focus questions for each specific class session.
  - A student in a class where the instructor did not have a course calendar provided the following statement, “The professor’s course calendar was like his office hours: non-existent.”
# CONTENT-FOCUSED COURSE CALENDAR

## Calendar of Activities

Tentative Course Topics, Calendar of Activities, Assignments, Test Dates

*This is an example of a regular 16-week course; modify as needed.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Modules/Topics/Activities</th>
<th>Readings/Quizzes</th>
<th>Alignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus: Course Introduction; and Professional Dispositions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 31-Sept. 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Introduction to Education Research; Selecting a Research Topic; and ACA Code of Ethics (Research Section)</td>
<td>Chapters 1 and 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 7-11</td>
<td>Sept 7 Labor Day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CITI Training (no face-to-face meeting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 14-18</td>
<td>Sept 16 Census Day; Last day to drop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reviewing the literature and Preparing a Research Plan</td>
<td>Chapters 3 and 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 21-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Learner-Centered Course Calendar

## Calendar of Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Meeting Dates and Times</th>
<th>Below is a list of weekly pre- and in-class learning objectives that you should focus on:</th>
<th>Below is a list of assigned readings, assessment activities, and teaching strategies for each class session. Quizzes will focus on pre-class objectives.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| January 17th (4:45-7:05pm)    | **Pre-Class Objectives:** (1) Identify important elements of course syllabus; (2) recognize course objectives and assessment activities; (3) identify instructor’s beliefs toward teaching and learning; and (4) recognize potential use of course calendar.  
**In-Class Objectives:** (5) identify importance of learning about research in counseling; (6) recognize implications for practice based on counseling research; (7) identify peer-reviewed journals in counseling; (8) recognize benefits and challenges of conducting research; and (9) create a plan to identify counseling-related topics for a research proposal. | - Chapter 1  
- Syllabus Overview  
- Quiz 1 (syllabus)  
- Active learning and dynamic lecturing |
(4) OVERALL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Tone and Positive Expectations
  - Instructor uses personal pronouns, focuses on student learning, and communicates positive and high expectations.
  - Instructor describes students as responsible for their learning.

- Course Policies
  - All UTRGV policies and procedures are provided. *Instructor makes an attempt to connect policies and procedures with course content, teaching beliefs, and/or pedagogical practices.*

- Instructor Beliefs
  - Instructor’s beliefs and attitudes toward teaching and learning is included throughout the syllabus. A rationale for how beliefs are related to teaching strategies, assessment activities, and/or learning environment is provided.
INTRODUCTION
We designed ENGL 4343-Composition Theory & Pedagogy... to scare the hell out of people with that name.:) Seriously, its only competition for unsexiest title is Academic Discourse Studies! While the title is heavy, it’s a class about how writing works and how to teach it, and the class goals are pretty straightforward. One, I’m going to expose you to a variety of composition theories—explanations of why and how we write, learn to write, and teach other people to write. We’ll be talking about these theories after you read them, but we’ll also be experimenting with them as writing teachers-in-training.

Two, you’re going to learn how to give and take feedback on teaching and writing. So you will be learning about composition pedagogy, practicing composition pedagogy, and getting/giving criticism on composition pedagogy to help us all improve on how we act as writing teachers and students.

Three, it’s a class on teaching, so there are things we do to get better at teaching and learning (even if your immediate post-degree goal isn’t to work in a classroom). You practice a lot and get better at handling new situations. You also have to work on articulating your own theory of teaching—what you do, how it works on other people, and how you know it’s working. To that end, you’ll be developing an online teaching portfolio that will have a number of pieces of writing that demonstrate what you know, do, and assess as a writing teacher.

All this work should help you synthesize and apply the teaching concepts and strategies you learn throughout Composition Theory & Pedagogy, and I’m looking forward to helping you improve your learning, writing, and teaching processes.
INSTRUCTOR’S BELIEFS TOWARD LEARNING

MY BELIEFS TOWARD TEACHING AND LEARNING

Over the past year, my teaching philosophy has changed as the result of serving as the director of the UTRGV Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE). I have interacted and learned from wonderful UTRGV teachers. I also attended three national conferences that focus on teaching and learning as well as assessment. My teaching practices have gone from some interactive engagement to a plethora of active learning and alignment between student learning objectives and assessment activities.

*I now believe that “whoever does the work does the learning.” When I started teaching in 2011, I would prepare PPT presentations, study guides and exam focus questions, and talked for most of every class session. Now that I learned about active learning and interactive engagement, I see teaching not as somebody paraphrasing a textbook in the front of a classroom but rather as a facilitator who uses active learning strategies to make space for students to create and co-construct knowledge and meaning. I went from a teacher or lecturer to facilitator and guide, which puts you in a position to be responsible and accountable for your learning. While I continue to work hard to prepare before, during, and after class activities to help you work and reflect on course goals and objectives, you are now responsible for your learning. Therefore, you now have to take a pre-class quiz to measure your foundational knowledge and level of preparation to participate in class activities that tap into higher levels of learning such as application, evaluation, and learning how to learn.*

*I now use multiple teaching strategies to support your learning experiences. I use active learning and FLIP activities, present materials in different modes, encourage collaborative learning and peer instruction, provide transparent assignments with a clear purpose, and use wellness-check
FOCUS ACTIVITY

- Take **2-minutes** to reflect on the following questions (#2 on handout):
  - Identify at least two ways to make your syllabus more learner-centered
  - Identify a strategy to use active learning and interactive engagement to encourage students to interact with the syllabus before or during the first day of class
If your objective is for students to demonstrate understanding of essential syllabus items and/or build rapport with your class, consider using any of the following:

- **Syllabus quiz** to give students a reason to read and learn from the syllabus
- **Active learning and syllabus speed dating** to give students a reason to read and learn from the syllabus
- **Active learning and first day graffiti** to encourage students to reflect on their previous learning experiences, what they expect to learn in your course, and how they can apply what they learn in your course to their future educational or professional career
RESOURCES AND HELPFUL READINGS

RESOURCES AND HELPFUL READINGS
