Syllabus 101: Roadmap to Success

Claudia Vela Hernández, M.Ed.

Photo by Denys Nevozhai on Unsplash
Claudia Vela

Instructional Development Designer at CTE/ Ed.D. Candidate In Educational Leadership at UTRGV

Contact Information

Office: Center for Teaching Excellence  EDU 1.525c
CTE Director: Dr. Javier Cavazos
Administrative Assistants: Adolfo H. /Nayelli G.
Office Hours: 8:00-12:00   1:00-5:00
Office Telephone: (956) 665-3763
CTE Website: http://www.utrgv.edu/cte/
E-mail: claudia.vela02@utrgv.edu

Response Time
Generally I will respond emails right away if I am at the office; otherwise, I will respond within 24hrs of receiving them.

Like CTE on Facebook! UTRGV Center for Teaching Excellence https://www.facebook.com/utrgvcte/
Learning Objectives:

By the end of this session:

• You will be able to identify the components of an effective course syllabus.

• You will be able to develop your syllabus according to UTRGV guidelines.
Syllabus Quiz

“We are wiser together than we are alone”

- You have five minutes to review the syllabus
- Get together in teams of four
- You have five minutes to answer ten questions about the syllabus.
- The first group to answer all the questions correctly wins!

The syllabus quiz helps students make sure they understand the important policies of the course before they embark into the course.
What is the purpose of the syllabus?

It's in the syllabus.

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

www.phdcomics.com

Ideas from experts!
What is a Syllabus?

1. Sets the tone for the course (Posner & Rudnitsky, 1994).
2. Communicates what, when, and how students will learn.
3. Makes clear to students what they need to do in order to be successful.
4. Communicates expectations in terms of student responsibilities.
5. Deter misunderstandings about course policies.
6. An invitation, a contract, or/and a guiding reference?
Teaching Tip

Use the syllabus as a classroom management tool to set clear expectations for workload, learning outcomes, learner behavior and responsibilities, deadlines, grading, late assignments and assessment.

Mary Bart, Faculty Focus
UTRGV Syllabus Template

Now What?
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
Benefits of a learner-centered syllabus

• It focuses on the needs of the students and their learning process.
• Instructors specifically include information that will facilitate the academic success of students.

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.”

Example: learner centered syllabus
Criteria of a Learner-Centered Syllabus

• Learning Goals and Objectives
• Assessment Activities
• Course Schedule
• Overall Learning Environment
Learning Objectives

The Alignment Model (something to think about)

The Alignment Model is fundamental to the basic structure of a curriculum, a course, or a class.

The alignment model emphasizes the cohesiveness among three course components:

1. **Learning Objectives**: The expectations you have for what you want your students to be able to **do** following instruction.

2. **Assessments**: The measurement of how well the students have achieved the objectives.

3. **Instructional Activities**: The content, its delivery, and the classroom activities used to support the students in learning the objectives.

Clearly state the course objectives.

**Consider**: Are the objectives measurable and aligned with your evaluations?
Bloom’s Taxonomy Levels

1. Remembering
2. Understanding
3. Applying
4. Analyzing
5. Evaluating
6. Creating
Bloom’s Taxonomy

• 1. **Remembering** Can the student recall or remember the information?: *define, duplicate, list, memorize, recall, repeat, reproduce, state*

• 2. **Understanding** Can the student explain ideas or concepts?: *classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate, paraphrase*

• 3. **Applying** can the student use the information in a new way?: *choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write*

• 4. **Analyzing** Can the student distinguish between the different parts?: *appraise, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test*

• 5. **Evaluating** Can the student justify a stand or decision?: *appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, evaluate*

• 6. **Creating** Can the student create new product or point of view?: *assemble, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, write.*
Example:

Objective: By the end of this session, students will be able to discuss the relevance of political theory in current politics.

Assignment: A short paper assignment (reflection) drawing the relevance to current politics.
## Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning</th>
<th>Assessment Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After participating in this course, you should be to <strong>explain</strong> and give examples 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>

- Connect with learning outcomes
- Include a description
- Include evaluation procedures (rubric)
Course Schedule or Calendar

• In a learner-centered syllabus, a course schedule:
  ➢ Provides a list of readings, class meeting dates, or assessment due dates in chronological order.
  ➢ 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.

• For a student in a class where the instructor did not have a course calendar, she provided the following statement, “The professor’s course calendar was like his office hours: non-existent.”
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.
Course Policies

• It’s where you set the tone.

Authoritarian

“Turn off your cell phone. DON’T touch it in class or I will take it away!!”

“No late papers accepted ever under any circumstances.”

“Don’t come to class unprepared!”

“Do not ask me any questions in class about grading, course policies etc, you waste valuable time and everything is on the syllabus!”

More examples: samples regarding electronic devices in the classroom

Welcoming

Cell phone use for the purposes of texting email or other social media is not permitted. Earphones for music are encouraged during lab work, as long as the volume allows you to hear announcements. Also cell phone or other cameras may be used to photograph project in progress.
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:
If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor and contact Student Accessibility Services to schedule an appointment to initiate services. It is recommended that you schedule an appointment with Student Accessibility Services before classes start. However, accommodations can be provided at any time. Brownsville Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at accessibility@utrgv.edu. Edinburg Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at accessibility@utrgv.edu.

MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD:
Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (http://my.utrgv.edu); you will be contacted through email with further Instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades.
SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, and VIOLENCE:
In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.
Recommended on all syllabi

• **Attendance** *(Recommended on all syllabi. It may be modified by the instructor as long as it’s not inconsistent with UTRGV policy).*

• **Scholastic Integrity** *(Recommended on all syllabi)*

• **Course Drops** *(Recommended on all syllabi. It may be modified by the instructor as long as it’s not inconsistent with UTRGV policy).*
Resources for Students and Faculty

It offers a variety of resources to help students and faculty with their multimedia production needs for class related projects and presentations.


Tutoring [http://www.utrgv.edu/math/academics/general/tutoring/index.htm](http://www.utrgv.edu/math/academics/general/tutoring/index.htm)

University of the Sciences Website
[http://www.usciences.edu/teaching/tips/activities.shtml](http://www.usciences.edu/teaching/tips/activities.shtml)
Teaching and Learning activities (tips for faculty)

Resources

Faculty Focus
http://www.facultyfocus.com/search-results/?q=syllabus%20design

Stanford University

The Chronicle of Higher Education

The Teaching Assistant Experience