

## CREATING YOUR COURSE SYLLABUS

The syllabus you create for the Writing Program may be a straightforward “Just the Facts” document, a [creative desk-top published](#) brochure, or even a [hand-drawn comic book](#) production. And when it comes to your online syllabus, the potential for creativity is limited only by your own technical skill and time constraints. Regardless of the approach you choose, strive to make your syllabus visually appealing and easy to navigate, as it represents your students’ first impression of your mad handout skills.

Now then: Texas House Bill 2504 requires that all undergraduate organized class syllabi communicate the following:

1. Brief description of each major course requirement, including each major assignment and examination
2. Course learning objectives
3. General description of the subject matter of each lecture or discussion
4. Required or recommended readings

[The University of North Texas requirements are a bit more detailed.](#)

1. Instructor contact information (name, office location, office hours, phone<sup>1</sup>, email address)
2. Basic course information (course title, number, and section)
3. Required and optional materials needed for course
4. Course competencies / assignments /requirements
5. Evaluation and grading policies
6. Attendance expectations and consequences (UNT Policy 15.2.5)
7. Date, time, and place of final examination
8. ADA accommodation statement (UNT Policy 18.1.14)
9. Emergency notification and procedures
10. Academic integrity expectations and consequences (UNT Policy 18.1.16)

You must post your to the to the [Faculty Profile System by the 7th day of class.](#)

System Login: University of North Texas Login System

Below is a more thorough consideration of the variety of information necessary for your course (of course not all components are necessary for any one class). Your syllabus must also be posted by the seventh day of class to the Faculty Profile System.

<b>Syllabus Component</b>	<b>Description and Usefulness to Engaged Learning</b>
Instructor information	Beyond office hours and office location, includes instructor educational background, work experience, other interests such as

---

<sup>1</sup> List the department number: 940-565-2050

	music or art or sports, passion, teaching philosophy, research, etc.
Purpose of the course	Explains why the course is part of curriculum and how it fits with other courses, what level student the course is designed for, how the course addresses the university mission, and what the course will prepare students to do.
Course description	Captures interests of students, provides overview of course such as the content, value to students, philosophy and assumptions, relevance, reflection of values of instructor/department/university, process of course through the semester.
Course objectives	Indicates what students will take away from the course, how they will demonstrate their learning, and what skills they will attain.
Course content and access to content	Includes readings, media, etc. and how students can access this information, what is required and what is optional, what must be purchased, library resources, etc. Also includes why the selected content is important to the course, discipline, and students.
Resources	Provides links to and information on exhibits, observations, libraries, technology, field experts, websites, writing centers, learning center, tutors, etc. Includes information about clickers or other polling devices if they are required.
Course calendar	Access for information about assignments and due dates, progression of content and assignments, in class learning activities.
Course requirements	Detailed descriptions of each assignment including outcomes, learning activities, deliverables, reference materials, and resources. Include working in groups, participation requirements, etc. However, to keep the syllabus shorter depending on the number of assignments you have, you may consider having this information on a separate handout.
Policies and expectations	Includes departmental, and university mandated policies, instructor expectations, attendance, make-up work, guidelines of classroom behavior and consequences for not following them, class discussion guidelines and expectations, ground rules (such as an electronics policy), civility and conduct, academic integrity, disability, safety (if necessary), etc.
Evaluation and grading	Tells students how work will be assessed and graded, including self-assessment, peer-assessment, and faculty evaluation. Includes points for assignments and tests and descriptions of exams (type, content covered, skills, etc.).
Other	How to study for course, learning contract, tips for succeeding in discipline, tips for succeeding in online learning, etc.

All three of these lists are like a vegan power bar. Good for you, but not exactly tasty.

As graduate students, you've seen plenty of syllabi that are stellar examples of brevity, while freshman writing syllabi tend to look more like end-user agreements.

Of course, the reason behind these differences is very simple: the majority of our students are new to every single aspect of college life, ergo our syllabi must take into account all sorts of topics, issues, concerns and confusions that the more seasoned student has long-since figured out. Keep in mind that this isn't a fault of your first year students. We were all there once.

While the program's pedagogical expectations are clearly articulated in the first portion of our textbook, the particulars of your class policies are—to an extent—up to you. These include (but aren't limited to):

1. Late paper policy
2. Tardiness policy
3. Use of cellphone (etc.) in class
4. If/how students contact you regarding absences
5. If/how students make-up missed in-class assignments
6. How students compose e-mails to you
7. How available you are to students via e-mail (**set boundaries**)
8. If/what exceptions you allow for your policies
9. How you wish students to address you and each other
10. Etc.

The clearer you are about course procedures and expectations, the fewer miscommunications you will have with your students. And remember, make sure that your syllabus clearly states that your policies and the course schedule are subject to change with adequate warning! No one makes it through a semester without at least one course-correction, so make sure that it's on your syllabus.

While it's vital your syllabus reflect your class policies as well as your personal style, the best way to improve your mad syllabus construction skills is to look at other syllabi. Whether you're a novice or a syllabi ninja, you can always steal—learn something new.

You will notice that, unlike upper-level courses, freshman composition syllabi are often extremely detailed. This is their very first semester (for example the difference between an excused absence in high school and an excused absence in college is a major conceptual change), so it is best to spell out every possible item you imagine could possibly be misconstrued. Remember, we were all freshmen once.

It's best to include some sort of accountability structure that documents to your satisfaction that the students demonstrate a reasonable familiarity with the contents of your syllabus. You can give them a quiz, ask them to list the ten things they thought most important or intriguing, or simply ask that they sign a detachable part of the document indicating they have read and understood it (albeit this last suggestion is akin to the user agreements we check every time we upgrade software).

### First Day Strategies

For starters, I recommend making the syllabus available to your students before your first face-to-face meeting. If an offer of extra-credit (or the threat of a mini-quiz) helps encourage your students to look at it before day one, then you can start

off in a more productive fashion and address questions and make clarifications rather than deal virgin territory!

Regardless, here are some ideas for engaging with the syllabus on Day 1.

- Ask students to read specific sections aloud.
- Ask students to form groups, each of which is responsible for distilling and communicating for the class a section of the syllabus.
- Rather than read through the syllabus, prepare a presentation. Power Points are becoming passé, but they still have their place. You can even record your introduction in some sort of medium.
  - You do want a boilerplate *first day* introduction, because you will get new students until the end of add/drop.
- Have students identify any areas they want clarified, and ask them to bring these questions to the second-class meeting.
- Put an unexpected request on the last line of the syllabus, e.g., *After you have read this, please e-mail me a clean joke.* Give extra credit for those who comply.

### Ice Breakers

You've sat through enough first days where all the instructor did was go over the syllabus. Hardly a thrilling first day, is it? Instead, if you've managed to get your students actively engaged in asking or answering questions about the syllabus and the course in general, you don't need to address every last detail. Try spending the first 20 minutes or so on the syllabus, then spend the rest of class on an ice-breaking activity. As the Writing Program obliges students to engage in group projects, it's a good idea to start as you intend to proceed, and have them work in groups from day one. If students begin learning about one another from the first day, this also helps you get a bead on who might be a good fit with whom for the eventual group/team formations.

**Below is a particularly** Here are some examples of great ice-breaker activities:

- Lansing Community College Center for Teaching Excellence: [Icebreaker Activities](#) (32 strategies).
- Human Bingo: Create a four by four bingo card with a different characteristic in each box, such as freshman, has traveled abroad, married, and lives on campus. Have students ask each other if they have one of the characteristics on the card. No one may use a given student for more than one characteristic. When a student does have one of the characteristics, they will sign their name in the corresponding box. Whoever has all the boxes signed on their card first shouts "Bingo" and wins a prize. Bring several prizes in case there is a tie.

## Office Hours

Consider including your policy regarding how you expect students to use your office hours. For example: *I encourage you to come to office hours with questions or concerns regarding the class. I'm always glad to speak with you personally regarding any concerns you have about assignments or your class progress.*

Be aware that your students may feel more comfortable seeking your counsel for issues that are not specific to your class: you may be the only instructor who knows their first name. While it's ok for you to listen and respond to typical first semester problems, it's also important for you to recognize that you are not a professional advisor. It's a good idea to have the flyers for student counseling services handy, and don't be afraid to use the First Alert program.

Your students will be adjusting to a pretty intense learning curve: your challenge is to be supportive while simultaneously being clear about expectations and boundaries. You don't do students favors by being lenient with clearly stated objectives. Remember: you don't give grades. Students earn them.

## Designing the daily schedule

1. Using your medium of choice, create a calendar and first identify all scheduled class meetings and all official holidays.
2. Look at your own class schedules and identify their exam and paper due dates, as well as personal dates you know about in advance.
3. Make individual titles for every class activity, quiz, due date (etc.) you have planned.
4. Insert them into the calendar, taking numbers 1 and 2 into account.
5. Consider that a small percentage of students will not submit assignments on the due-date. Think about how you're going to deal with that now.
  - a. If you accept late papers, consider giving only a brief response, or just a letter / number grade. It's all right to assess their level of engagement and adjust yours accordingly.
  - b. Don't ask students to submit late papers at the Eng. Dept. offices.
6. Be honest with yourself: how much turnaround time do you need?
  - a. For example, do you want to grade a major assignment before or after Thanksgiving?
7. Consider making the final Portfolio due-dates a rolling one. Do a lottery, so that one-half or one-third of the class submits their Portfolio on Monday, then another portion on Wednesday (etc.). As long as students know about this at the beginning of the semester, they will be okay with it.
  - a. Remember: you are not responding in writing to portfolios. You are evaluating and grading them, but you are not writing comments. Some few students will collect them, but most won't (even if they say they will).

8. Prepare yourself for end-of-the-semester student panic attacks. They happen. Do be (personally) kind. Don't be lenient.

## Helpful Hints

---

### Attendance / Tardiness

- Having students begin class by writing in their Huponemata for the first 5 minutes of class is one way to take syllabus if you're the sort who can "eyeball" it. Latecomers are also more obvious (bonus points for the shame factor) when everyone else is quietly writing.
- State on your syllabus a policy that latecomers will be the first called upon to respond to the day's assignments / questions / reader responses (etc.)

### The day's plan isn't working Strategies

- Have some generic exercises in reserve for those days when the energy on your or the class's part isn't there.
  - **Cliché' exercise:** have groups compose a short story using every cliché they can find. Read aloud. **Objective:** don't use clichés.
  - **Biography exercise:** have students write a bio. for a model in an advertisement. Discuss why / how visuals led to assessments / judgments. **Objective:** understanding that all visuals can be 'read' as a text, whether or not such judgments are reliable.
  - **Thesaurisitus:** (Prepare this ahead of time). Cut and paste a particularly descriptive paragraph from a novel or article. Using your computer's thesaurus software, choose particularly evocative words and replace them with the first suggestion the thesaurus creates. Italicize those words. Keep this as a PDF or Word Document on Drop Box (etc.). For the class exercise, put this document on the overhead, and allow the class to read the text carefully, discussing as a class the crazy italicized words. Then have students get in groups and ask them to guess what the original word was. **Objective:** appreciating connotation s. denotation.

**WELCOME TO DC2: IMAGING**

IMAGING (NOUN) - A 1-BLOCK COURSE TO STUDY THE PROCESS OF EDITING PHOTOS AND DIGITAL IMAGES, TO PRODUCE SPECIAL VISUAL EXPRESSIONS

SCHOOL CODE: 2200-1624

**ABSENCE POLICY**

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ASSESSED WORK DUE TO AN ABSENCE. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK THE MAKEUP FOLDER OR ASK FOR YOUR WORK. ASSESSMENTS ARE REMOVED AS PER THE STUDENT HANDBOOK.

**LATE WORK**

PROJECTS ARE DUE AT THE POSTED TIME. LATE WORK MAY RECEIVE A REDUCED GRADE. NO PROJECTS MORE THAN 5 DAYS LATE WILL BE ACCEPTED.

**READING THURSDAYS**

AS A CLASS WE READ FOR 20 MIN. EVERY THURSDAY. BRING A BOOK!

**CLASSROOM POLICIES**

THIS IS A PROJECT-BASED CURRICULUM. WE TYPICALLY HAVE MINIMAL "TRADITIONAL LECTURE FORMAT" CLASS TIME. YOU ARE EXPECTED TO BE WORKING ON PROJECTS AND RESEARCHING MORE FREQUENT IN THE ABOVE SOFTWARE SUITS AT ALL TIMES. VIDEO TUTORIALS ARE PROVIDED TO ENSURE EVERYONE'S SUCCESS AND UNDERSTANDING. NO COMPUTERS OR GAMING IS ALLOWED IN THE CLASSROOM AT ANY TIME WITHOUT PERMISSION.

**BRING YOUR SUPPLIES & PARENT NOTE BY FRIDAY!**

3-RING BINDER  
PAPER  
PENCILS/PENS  
2 OR 3 CAMP DRIVE SHARPS

**GRADING SCALE:**  
100 - 90 = A  
89 - 80 = B  
79 - 70 = C  
69 - 60 = D  
59 - 0 = F

NO FORM OF CHEATING OR UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR WILL BE TOLERATED.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

SCENE GRAPHIC ART  
ILLUSTRATION FOR PHOTOGRAPHY  
PHOTO EDITING  
EMERSON CSS

**Room 213 English 621**

Welcome to my class. My main goal this semester is to get you thinking and then to learn the art of Persuasion, so you can effectively communicate your ideas to others. I would also like to give you the opportunity to read good, thought-provoking texts and novels you just can't put down.

**Areas of Study**

Non-Fiction  
Novel Study  
*Macbeth*  
*Animal Farm*

Speaking/  
Listening: 16%

Reading/  
Viewing: 32%

Final  
Assessment: 20%

Writing/  
RePresenting: 32%

**Class Rules:**

- Be on Time
- Be Prepared
- Be Polite
- Be ready to think
- Be open to new ideas
- Be willing to take risks

**You will need:**

- A Journal
- A binder
- Post-it Notes
- A gmail account

**FASHION**

**BE A SUCCESS!**

Be on time to class  
Be prepared with all supplies  
Be productive - use time wisely!  
Be polite & respectful

**COURSE INFO:**  
FASHION is a 1-block class to offer an overview of the fashion industry.

**ATTENDANCE**  
Check the binder for missing work when you've been absent.  
LATE WORK MAY RECEIVE REDUCED GRADE  
TARDY POLICY ENFORCED

**our textbook**  
FASHION MARKETING & MERCHANDISING

**project outline**  
PERSONAL STYLE  
FASHION HISTORY  
DESIGNING FASHIONS  
RETAIL STORES & APPAREL  
VISUAL MERCHANDISING  
BE THE BUYER

**grading scale**  
90 - 100 = A  
80 - 89 = B  
70 - 79 = C  
60 - 69 = D  
50 - 59 = F

magcover.com

school code: BVZQ-TN79B