Purpose of a syllabus

The syllabus is an important communication tool for the instructor, the student and a variety of individuals inside and outside the institution. It provides students with information and structure, and encourages development as learners through an overview of what can be anticipated, and what the instructor expects. In one respect, a syllabus is like a contract, which incorporates a job description and the measures to be used to evaluate performance.

A syllabus is also used as an indicator of the quality of a course and the professionalism of the instructor. Parents and prospective students may use a syllabus as part of their decision about enrollment in a course or at an institution. Syllabi are also reviewed by evaluators as part of a program or institutional accreditation review. Faculty and academic support personnel also review syllabi as part of the transfer course evaluation process. In some instances, a course syllabus has been important in resolving student complaints and in litigation.

All syllabi must be posted on WWU K: drive
(K:syllabi\<dept>\<term>\<course> <course#> <lastname>.pdf)

Required sections of a syllabus

1) Title
The heading of the syllabus must include “Walla Walla University - Seventh-day Adventist Higher Education”, the department, current term and “Course Syllabus”. An institutional logo is desirable but not essential.
For Example:

Walla Walla University - Seventh-day Adventist Higher Education
Department or School

Fall 2017
Course Syllabus

2) Basic course information
This section must include course number, course title, number of credits, meeting time and location.
For Example:

GNRL 121 – Introduction To Syllabus Construction (1 credit)

Class Schedule: M/W 2:00-3:50 pm
Classroom: KRH 205

3) Instructor information
The instructor’s full name, professional title, office number and building, office phone number, university email address, and office hours must be included. This section should also include a brief description for how a student can make an appointment with the instructor. Faculty may choose to include additional information such as cell phone number, preferred contact hours, etc. Do not include a personal email address. All communication should be sent through WWU email addresses only. See example on next page.
4) **Course description**
The minimum requirement is the course description as it appears in the current university bulletin. Additional details may be helpful for courses that are part of a sequence or that include special projects, laboratory components, or field trips. If the course contains content or processes that may be controversial, the instructor may wish to notify students and briefly explain why the content, etc., is included.

5) **University core themes/values**
The purpose of this section is to articulate how the university core themes are integrated at the course level. The table below is the recommended format to indicate the integration. Not all courses will integrate all core themes or to the same extent. Expectedly, courses will have a strong contribution to Excellence in Thought but it is also important to document how other core themes are integrated. For a concise description of each core theme, see the Core Themes Description at the end of this handout.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Core Theme</th>
<th>Summary of How The Core Theme is Actualized in the Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellence in Thought</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generosity in Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty in Expression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith in God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) **Learning objectives or outcomes**
Specific learning objectives or student learning outcomes are what students will be assessed on. They could include such thing as the understanding of specific information, the expression of specific professional behaviors, or the demonstration of specific skills. **The course level ‘student learning outcomes’ should relate to the department/school student learning outcomes.**

7) **Textbooks and materials**
List all required materials (not including common supplies). The complete title, edition, and ISBN number (if possible) should be given for each published work. The US Department of Education requires that students can readily determine the cost of course materials. All other uncommon items such as calculators, safety goggles, etc., should be indicated with an approximate cost. Any supplemental materials that are recommended should be indicated as such but the cost does not need to be indicated.

8) **Course requirements**
List each requirement a student should complete. Indicate the point value or weight toward the final course grade for each item. It may be useful to provide a brief description of each item and an indication if the assessment of an item is qualitative, quantitative, or pass/fail.

9) **Course grade**
Clearly indicate how the final grade is determined. This would typically include the “formula” to calculate a student’s total points and the points or percentages needed for each potential letter grade. Specify how a student accesses the recorded score for each item to help students be aware of their
performance and to provide opportunity for the student to discover any recording errors. It is advisable to include a statement that students are responsible for checking their scores on a regular basis.

Instructors must never record individual scores or grades in a manner such that they can viewed by others unless officially approved. If you need assistance, please contact the director of Academic Records or the associate VP for Academic Administration.

10) Grade scale
Include a grade scale as follows. Screen reader programs read from left to right, not down columns.

For Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11) Returned materials
All materials that have been graded must be viewable (even if temporarily) by the student for review. Indicate how a student can find the graded materials and if they need to be returned to the instructor. If the student can only view the materials temporarily, indicate so and state that they may not capture images of the material on any device.

In order to help students understand expectations, the following statement was voted by University Senate to appear in all syllabi:

“All materials submitted by a student will be evaluated in a timely manner (typically 2 weeks). Exams will be scored and be accessible for viewing by a student before the next exam in a given course. The score for each class requirement may be accessed by ____________.”

Complete the underlined portion to inform students how to find the score for each item in a course.

12) Academic integrity
Instructors should provide a link to the university academic integrity policy and state any specific issues related to academic integrity regarding the course or academic discipline. One of the most common responses students give when confronted with an accusation of academic integrity is that they did not know it was a problem. Students readily share ideas, information, materials, and course products with each other so it may be advisable to be clear what your expectations are. Instructors should also explain what the consequences are for a breach of academic integrity.

13) Accommodations for a documented disability
Instructors must include a statement indicating their willingness to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities and refer them to Disability Support Services. Specific information on how to contact Disability Support Services must be included (phone number and web link). Instructors should not provide special accommodations to students without a documented disability. Accommodations are not retroactive when a disability is documented.

14) Emergency procedures
You should include the following statement in your syllabus: “WWU is dedicated to providing a safe campus environment and would like you to be aware of emergency preparedness resources available online with information related responses to fire, active shooters, injuries, etc. and our emergency notification system. Additionally, an emergency procedures flip chart and evacuation routes are posted in classrooms near the door.”
15) **Title IX: Sex Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy**
   You should include the following statement in your syllabus: “WWU prohibits all forms of sex discrimination and sexual misconduct including, but not limited to, sex-based intimidation and harassment, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and sexual violence. If you have been subjected to, or are aware of, an instance of sex discrimination or sexual misconduct, you are highly encouraged to report it to the Title IX coordinator via email, through the Title IX webpage, or by calling (509) 527-2141. The University has resources to help.

16) **Tentative schedule**
   Include a tentative schedule that shows each class meeting and the intended topics to be presented or events that occur. Indicate when all significant assessments (exams, final exam, etc.) occur and when all assignments, projects, reports, etc., are due. Consult the current final exam schedule for the correct day and time of the final exam. The instructor should consider including a statement that the schedule will be adhered to as much as possible but is subject to change based on the professional judgment of the instructor.

### Recommended sections of a syllabus

17) **Integration of faith and learning**
   Describe how the course content, discussion, assignments, etc., are influenced by faith. How would the course be different than one with a similar title at a secular campus or another faith based University?

18) **Late policy**
   State the policy for late work, missed classes, missed exams, etc. Generally, the less impact an assignment has on other course members the more likely that late work is accepted. Additionally, the more central an item is to a student’s understanding, the less tolerance there should be for late work.

19) **Use of old course materials or materials from other courses**
   Students are likely to access course materials (exams, reports, notes, etc.) from previous years or from similar courses at another institution. State what is and is not acceptable use of previous materials. For example, is studying the exam from last year permissible or advisable? It may be helpful to provide previous materials online so all students have access regardless of their social interactions.

20) **Use of technology**
   Describe what devices students may or may not use in the classroom. This may include items such as cell phone use, audio recording, capture of power point presentations, use of laptops, IPads, “cheating” watches, etc.

21) **Safety and health (especially for lab classes)**
   In some courses separate safety information is given before a specific activity, the syllabus should include a short statement about the importance of safety and indicate that more detailed information will be distributed.

22) **Grading disagreements or errors**
   It is helpful to the student and the instructor if there is a procedure and appropriate deadlines specified for correcting grading errors or addressing disagreements. This encourages students to review graded material promptly and reduces the probability of end of term disagreements.

23) **Student conduct**
   Some faculty have specific expectations for professional behavior in the classroom, laboratory, clinic, etc. Specify expectations, along with how the expression of professionalism will be evaluated.
24) **Helpful resources (web links, etc.)**
   List other resources that could be helpful for a student. Web links are especially helpful.

25) **Tips for success**
   Share useful tips. Should a student study the textbook more than notes? Should they do all the sample problems? Is the web page for the textbook from the publisher helpful?

**Other information**

1) **Workload**
   According to the Department of Education, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in learning outcomes and verified by student achievement that is not less than:
   
a) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 10-12 weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
   
b) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (a) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.
   
   A student should expect to invest about 30 hours per term per credit for all course related activities.

2) **Progress reports**
   Although a student should be able to determine their tentative course grade at any time, the institution has a special alert for poor academic performance. Inform students to check for progress reports via their MyWWU.

   WWU **requires** all instructors to submit **two** online progress reports **per term** for students who have been identified as 1) ‘‘high academic risk’’ (instructor receives an email indicating student names), or 2) who have a **tentative grade of C- or below**. These reports are an important communication tool for students, academic advisors, mentors, residence hall deans, and academic administration. Instructors are always welcome to alert the academic advisement office or the associate academic vice president any time they are concerned about academic performance, attendance, behavior, etc.

3) **Accessibility Checker**
   It is important for individuals with a visual disability to be able to access your syllabi by using a screen reader. To evaluate your Word document compatibility with screen readers click on File>Info>Check for issues>check accessibility. When you try this, you should see a pop up box on the right of your Word document that indicates any “errors” and “warnings” (see example to right).

   To locate each error or warning click on each item below the heading. In this example, you should click on “Table” in error section and “Table Cell” in the warnings section to find the identified points in your document. One of the more common errors is the lack of figure captions.

**Core themes descriptions (summary)**

- **Excellence in Thought**
  Embody the purpose of Walla Walla University: to educate students in preparation for effective careers, professions, or further study. The objectives identified for this core theme are to demonstrate effective student learning, provide a positive learning environment, and help students to identify and achieve their academic and career goals.
- Generosity in Service
  As an institution of higher education in the context of the global community as well as in the tradition of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The objectives to accomplish this core theme are to address regional, national, and global humanitarian needs and inspire leadership within a Christian worldview.
- Beauty in Expression
  Relates to the environment, infrastructure and esthetics of the university as it communicates and accomplishes its’ mission. This includes enriching learning and social opportunities that may be inside or outside the classroom, demonstration of professionalism by students, promotion of positive interactions between students and between students and faculty, as well as participation in scholarly activities such as presentations, publications, and performances.
- Faith in God
  Faith in God is embedded in the history and purpose of the institution. This would include activities and interactions that encourage Christian faith development and spiritual growth, promote Adventist holistic living, life balance, and the discussion or adoption or Christian ethics.

References

- Constructing Legally Sound Syllabi - Hampton University General Counsel.
- Michigan Technical University Syllabus Requirements
- Sacramento State Course Syllabus Templates
- University of Delaware Syllabus Templates
- Brown University – Creating a Brown University Syllabus
- Texas legislature requirements for a syllabus
- How To Make A Syllabus
- University of West Florida: “Best Practices” for Designing a Learning-Centered Syllabus
- Construction of a Course Syllabus: Integration of the ASHA Knowledge and Skills Acquisition
- Best Practices in Syllabus Construction from the UNCW Center for Teaching Excellence
- Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching – syllabus construction
- University of Connecticut - Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Syllabus
- Exploring What the Syllabus Communicates. The Teaching Professor December 2016.
- Does the Document Matter? The Evolving Role of Syllabi in Higher Education. Published online: Sep 2016

Online Videos

- Syllabus Best Practices, Iowa State University.
- Sloan Consortium – Course & Syllabus Design
- Preparing an Effective Course Syllabus – Northern Illinois University

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