Syllabus Construction

What is a syllabus?
Our friends at Merriam-Webster define a syllabus as a “summary outline of a…course of study…”  
http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/syllabus

While providing students with an outline or “roadmap” of where the course will take them is critically important, a well-constructed syllabus is much more than that. A syllabus defines the instructor and student responsibilities for the course (Shelton, 2008).

Do I need a syllabus?
One word—YES.

How do I get started?
Your department may have templates or guidelines for creating syllabi (make sure you find this out before beginning). In general, most departments require approval from the curriculum committee for all new course syllabi. If you are teaching a course that is already offered, start by getting a copy from fellow faculty or your program chair.

What should be included in the syllabus?
Again—be sure to check with your department to determine if there is a template or other list of required syllabi elements. Online courses should utilize the Creighton Office of online Learning (COOL) guidelines.

- Course name*
- Course number*
- Course description*
- Credit hour allocation*
- Pre or co-requisite courses*
- Faculty contact information: Office number, phone number and email (be careful here if you choose to share your cell phone number with students; you may need to specify hours during which they may contact you).
- Faculty response time to emails (how long will it take you? 24 hours? What about weekends?)
- Course objectives (see the later module on writing learning objectives for guidance)#
- Required textbooks (remember to list these in whatever format you will use for required writing assignments, such as APA, MLA). Including an ISBN number is helpful.*#
- Methods of teaching learning: lecture, discussion, case studies etc.
- Methods of student evaluation: Exams, papers, quizzes. List the percentage of final grade or the total points for each method of evaluation.

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• How students will check their grades (i.e. BlueLine2 or NEST; if the grade book in BlueLine2 is used, you should include a statement that only grades in NEST are official.)

• Grading Scale: Check with your department for grading scale requirements. If rounding of grades occurs for any reason (such as at 0.5%) include a statement for this.

• Attendance Policy (if there is one)

• Academic Honesty or Ethics statement: Check with your department to see if there is standard wording regarding plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct. The Creighton Center for Student Integrity can provide you with guidance here as well: http://www.creighton.edu/studentlife/centerforstudentintegrity/codeofconduct/index.php See also the Creighton Student Handbook: http://www.creighton.edu/students/aboutstudentlife/studenthandbook/

• Exam policies: If there are time limits for an exam or other policies from your department regarding exams, you may list them here or refer to your department’s handbook.”

• Course and Faculty Survey policies: List when and how will the students complete these evaluations.

• Drop/Add deadlines: Refer the students to the Academic Calendars on the Registrar’s page for drop/add deadline dates.

• Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Accommodations Statement: This is a statement directing students who have already defined, documented disabilities. These students are eligible for accommodations, such as note takers, extended exam times, or taking exams in a separate location. Check with your department for guidance here, and also the later module on ADA. Generally, students should be directed to:
  1. Contact the Office of Disability Accommodations (ODA) located in the Harper Center (402-280-2749) in order to obtain a letter verifying the disability and the accommodations needed.
  2. Submit the letter and forms that are received from the ODA to you within a defined time frame.

• Academic Success Information: Include a statement that students who have academic concerns in your course should always meet with you first; however, if additional help is needed, direct them to the Creighton Office for Student Success which offers tutoring services and other resources may be available to them.

* Cannot be changed; must be the same as appears in Creighton University Bulletin.

# Changing course objectives usually requires approval by a curriculum committee; check with your department.

*# You will need to make sure the Creighton bookstore is notified of your textbook selection in time for students to check the requirements. Your department can assist you with this.

SUBMITTER INFORMATION:

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