

Essential Elements in a Course Syllabus

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This template is offered as an aid to faculty. A syllabus is an agreement between instructor and students. A well constructed syllabus conveys instructor expectations and course requirements to students, stimulates student interest in the course, and clearly outlines student responsibilities during the semester. When these details are included in writing in the syllabus and attention is called to them as the semester begins, faculty are likely to avoid problems later in the semester. The basic elements may be expanded. When questions arise about the course or syllabus, the department chair, course coordinator, and others who regularly teach the course are available as consultants. Submit a copy of the syllabus for each course to the department office.

Course Identifiers: Bulletin title, curricular designation and number, semester and year

Instructor Identifiers: Name, office location and office hours, phone number(s), e-mail and web addresses

Course description: as printed in the Bulletin including course prerequisites

Course Objectives, Goals or Learning Outcomes: What will students know and be able to do at the end of the semester? How does the course support knowledge in general education or the major, the program, or other requirements?

Materials Required and Recommended: texts, workbooks, supplements, equipment, software and hardware, reserved readings. Note where materials can be rented or purchased and where students can find materials on reserve (libraries, MyGateway, web links). Guide students to understand which purchases are essential and which are recommended.

Semester Schedule of Topics (*always indicate the schedule is “subject to modification”*): Identify the semester, year, and reference number for the course. Indicate for each week (or class) of the semester specific readings and assignments are due. Include when labs are scheduled, reports and requirements are due, when films will be shown, when tests and exams will be given.

Important Dates for the Semester: In the semester schedule insert dates students can use as benchmarks to assess their enrollment decision and progress: mid-semester, last day to enroll, last day to withdraw from a course of the University without receiving a grade, last day to withdraw from a course or withdraw from the University.

Instructional Strategies: indicate the instructional formats (lecture, discussion, demonstration, seminar, service-learning, online or face to face, etc.) and supports you intend to use so that students can plan to participate, work in groups, work online, schedule practica, labs, and projects.

- Indicate how technology will support the course. Explain your intention to use and expectation that students will use their student email accounts, the campus course management system (e.g. MyGateway), web links, listservs, video, interactive video, DVDs, CD-ROMs.

- Encourage students who experience initial academic difficulty on the first graded assignment to meet with you to discuss the work so that you can identify and suggest strategies to improve their performance.
- Indicate your interest in referring students to various campus resources that will strengthen their work and/or indicate your intention to connect them with the resources via the “Academic Alert” system.

Evaluation Criteria and Grading: List the value of all requirements, assignments and projects, tests and exams, attendance and participation relative to the course total. Include a grading scale showing how points earned during the semester will be assigned letter grades.

- Indicate how and whether incremental (plus/minus) grading applies to this course.
- Indicate how tardiness, attendance, and class participation affect semester grades.
- Indicate, when applicable, the minimum grade required for degree or certificate programs.

Faculty Expectations and Policies: Send clear messages to students about your expectations, requirements, and standards for coursework and behavior. Consider developing common policies regarding academic honesty, civility, disability access, and developing messages about campus procedures that appear in all the syllabi of a multi-section course or that appear in all syllabi from a department. Add a section that alerts students to Campus Safety procedures. Create your own or modify, adapt, or use the messages below:

Expectations:

- **Enumerate policies about attendance, late work, missed deadlines and tests, make-up opportunities, delayed grades. Examples are:**
 - Your success in this course is important to me. When I believe that the programs offered at the Center for Student Success (CSS) will help you academically, I will send a referral via the campus *Academic Alert System*. The CSS offers assistance tailored to specific instructional needs. Learn about the Academic Alert system in the online Student Planner, http://www.umsl.edu/studentlife/dsa/student_planner/stuservices/css.html
 - Make-up tests must be taken within a week. Arrangements will be made with the Campus Testing Center to administer your test.
 - Lab reports are due on Fridays. Five points will be deducted for each day that the report is overdue.
 - Late papers will not be accepted. Delayed grades will not be assigned. Please speak with me to resolve problems you encounter.
 - Class attendance and participation is essential for success. When you are absent, it is your responsibility to clarify missed assignments with classmates or with me prior to the next class.
 - If you expect to miss class to participate in a university-sanctioned activity, be sure to submit a Student Absence Form early in the semester so that we can discuss your responsibilities for fulfilling the requirements of the classes you will miss.
 - Requests for exceptions to these policies must be discussed with me in advance.
- **Enumerate expectations for submitting required work:**
 - Submitted work will be typed, double-spaced and submitted in print, electronically, etc.
 - Written work must adhere to the style of the discipline: MLA, APA, Chicago Style, etc.
 - Written work will be evaluated for composition and grammar.

Elements of a Syllabus (continued)

- When students' work conveys that they require additional help in _____, students will be referred to the Writing Lab, Math Lab, Supplemental Instruction tutors, the Center for Student Success. I also plan to use the Academic Alert system when I believe these academic supports will benefit your success this semester.

- **Academic Honesty:**
 - Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas without crediting that person. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and may lead to failure on an assignment, in the class, and dismissal from the University. View this campus policy here:
<http://www.umsl.edu/services/academic/assets/PDFs/Dishonesty-Rev-9-08.pdf>
 - You are responsible for being attentive to and observant of campus policies about academic honesty as stated in the University's Student Conduct Code:
<http://www.umsl.edu/~webdev/bulletin/student-conduct.html>

- **Civility:**
 - Turn off beepers and cell phones during class. Adherence to the Student Conduct Code is expected.
 - My commitment is to create a climate for learning characterized by intellectual diversity and a respect for each other and the contributions each person makes to class. I ask that you make a similar commitment.
 - I am committed to insuring a positive learning environment by respecting that University policy:
http://www.umsl.edu/studentlife/dsa/student_planner/policies/positive.html

- **Access, Disability, Communication:**
 - Students requiring special accommodations should meet with me during office hours so that we can discuss how to meet your needs this semester. Prior to our meeting be sure you have met with someone in the campus offices that supports student with disabilities (MSC 144).
 - If you have difficulty communicating in English with the instructor of this course, contact Professor _____, the chairperson of the _____ Department in _____ Hall, room xxx or call this person at (insert office telephone numbers).

- **Campus Safety**
 - All members of the UMSL community are invited to register their cell and office phone numbers to receive notification of any pending danger on campus. Find instructions here:
<http://safety.umsl.edu/police/services/3n.html>
 - In the event of an emergency on campus, call Campus Police at 314.516.5155. A call to 911 on a cell phone only, will go to the St. Louis County Police. The St. Louis County Police will notify UMSL Police, but this may cause a delay in response. Campus Police know the best way to escort emergency vehicles to locations on campus.
 - If you do not feel comfortable walking to a parking lot, MetroLink stop, or anywhere else on campus, contact the Campus Police for an escort: 314.516.5155.

The Center for Teaching and Learning's website includes sample statements of civility, academic honesty, and disability access. These are available at www.umsl.edu/services/ctl. Some departments expect all syllabi to include standard statements of these policies in their course syllabi. Be certain to check whether this is the case in your program.