

Writing a Course Syllabus

**Faculty Development Program
Office of Medical Education
Boston University School of Medicine**

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Presentation Learning Objectives

As a result of viewing this presentation on writing a course syllabus, you will be able to:

- Define **a course syllabus**
- Recall **the purpose** of a syllabus
- List **the components** of a syllabus
- Recognize some **enhancements** to add to your course syllabus



What is a course syllabus?

A **syllabus** is a **written agreement** between you and your students that:

- provides a documentation of your course
- displays your beliefs about teaching
- requires revisions each year
- assists students in assessing their performance in your course

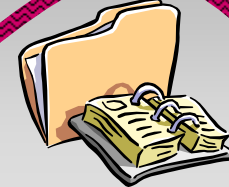


Why do I need a course syllabus?

A course syllabus provides for the student:

- The reasons for taking the course
- The scope of the course
- The selected course content
- A definition of what is required for a passing grade
- Contact information and available resources
- A statement of course policies

What are the components of a syllabus?



- Table of Contents
- Course General information
- Course Description
 - Introduction and Structure of Class
 - Required and supplementary text, readings and materials
 - Course learning objectives
 - Instructor/Lecturer/Facilitator information
- Course Schedule
- Course Policies
- Lecture Synopses

Table of Contents

A Syllabus
is basically
a study
guide.

Syllabus components

Course Information (sets the stage).....	3
General Information	
Course Director/Manager contact information	
Administrative Support	
Website (CourseInfo)	
Textbook Required and Suggested Readings	
Course Description (targets course expectations).....	4
Introduction to the Course	
Structure of the Course	
Course Goal and Learning Objectives	
Areas of Expertise and Interest of Invited Lecturers	
Class Schedule (timeline)	5
Reading Assignments and Projects	
Course Lecture and Small Group/Lab Topic List	
Quizzes and Exams	
Course Policies (management of student performances)	8
Attendance and Class Participation	
Grading	
Study Tips (optional and customized for each course).....	9
Lecture Synopses (begin each with learning objectives).....	10

Use clear
and concise
wording.

Page #
directs
students to
the
components

The TOC is
customized
to the
needs of
each
course.

The TOC
provides a
logical and
organized
plan to the
course
information.

Provide General Course Information

Introduction to Clinical Medicine

R109

Tuesday

8:30-4:30

B2849

Wed, Thurs & Fri

Psychiatry

Integrated Problems

8:30-12:30

2:00-3:30

Wed & Thurs

L211

- Title and course number
- Prerequisites
- Location of class
- Time
- Course Manager contact information
- Administrative support contact information

Give Instructor Information

Gross Anatomy L1004 **M & W: 11-2** 638-5100 **Wed: 9-12** W408 *Pharmacology* R608 617-414-
T, Th & Fri: 4-6pm @bmc.org *Genetics* 414-1500 @bumc.bu.edu



- Name and title
- Department
- Office/location
- Preferred contact phone#, email, pager
- Office hours
- Brief summary of academic background or expertise

Designate Learning Materials



- **Required Text**
 - Title, author, date, publisher
 - Availability
 - Cost
 - Use in class
- **Required Equipment (e.g., computer access for CourseInfo)**
- **Supplementary Reading**
 - Required or recommending
 - Availability

State the Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the course,

the students

will be able to

define the purpose

describe the topic

Please note the difference:

- Course **goals** orient the student to the overall purpose of the course.
- Course **learning objectives** specifically state the expectations of observable student performance of the course content.

Learning
Objective
example:

By the end of the specified course, the targeted students will be able to:

- ***Define the purpose of the course***
- ***Recognize the important issues***
- ***List the topics covered in the lectures, labs and small group sessions***

Supply A Course Schedule

Chapter 21

Wet Lab Assignment #7

February 23

Chapter 6 Quiz

October 14

Research hypothesis

Patient Journal

May 19

Dates for:

- Specific Lectures/Labs
- Reading Assignments
- Projects
- Quizzes and Exams



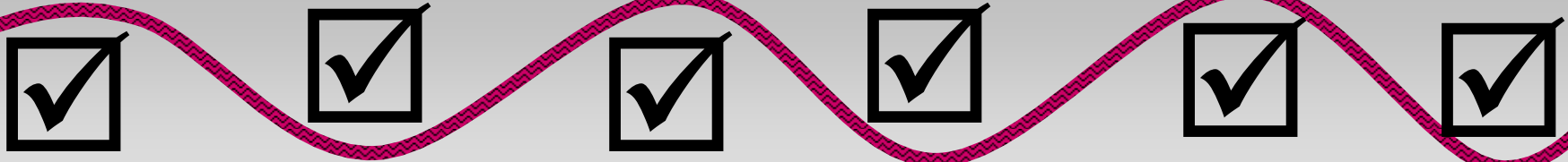
Date	Lecture Topic	Faculty	Lab/Discussion	Reading
9/21	Lecture 1 Lecture Hall	Dr. Best	Application of topic Rm. R123	Chap. 14
9/28	Quiz		Lecture 1 topic	Chap. 12-14

Specify Course Policies

Optional Sessions
40% Quizzes
10% Participation
Makeup Exam
No Plagiarism
Mandatory Attendance
CourseInfo
45% Research Paper

- Attendance/tardiness
- Class participation/collaboration
- Missed exams/assignments
- Lab safety and health
- Grading (% quizzes, final exam, assignments)
- Statement of academic misconduct
- Available support system
 - Course web site
 - Library/Computer lab

Syllabus Checklist



- ☐ General Overview of Course (Introduction, Description, Goals and Learning objectives)
- ☐ Contact information for Course Manager/Instructor
- ☐ Required Text or Equipment
- ☐ Course Schedule
- ☐ Course Policies
- ☐ Course Content Topics/Lecture Synopses

What Makes a “Good” Syllabus?

- ✓ Clear and concise wording
- ✓ Consistent format to pages
- ✓ Logically organized content
- ✓ Detailed and thorough information
- ✓ Terms in graphics correlate to lecture
- ✓ Proofread with no typos or misspellings

****Syllabus Enhancements****

- Your rationale for teaching the course
- Some guidelines on how to prepare for class
- A description of what students should expect from you and the course
- Good advice on studying for exams
- A statement regarding extra credit
- Information about re-taking exams or tutors
- Photos of Lecturers or Facilitators

Complete Your Syllabus

Syllabus

Course Title



Contact Info
Year, Session

Printing options:

- Determine if printing is in black and white or color
- Secure, if necessary, reproduction rights from lecture sources
- Prepare a “copying permission” statement for syllabus
- Decide if printing will be single or double sided depending on # of pages

Electronic choices:

How will the syllabus be available?

- CourseInfo site
- Floppy/ cd/ audiotape

Summary

- A course syllabus is a written contract between you and your students that provides an outline or a summary of the main points of a text, lecture or course of study.
- The purpose of a syllabus is to provide information on the course and define the scope of the content.
- A course syllabus consists of a general overview, course information, instructor contact information, required reading, course schedule, course policies and a summary of the content.
- Your syllabus can be enhanced by describing to the students what to expect from you and the course, tips on preparing for class and studying for exams and information on extra credit, re-taking exams and tutors.

Any Questions?

- Contact Faculty Development
 - Gail March, Ph.D., (617) 414-7440, gmarch@bu.edu
- Refer to these sources:
 - Texts
 - o Birdsall, M. (1989). *Writing, Designing, and Using a Course Syllabus*. Boston: Northeastern University, Office of Instructional Development and Evaluation.
 - o Lowther, M.A., Stark, J.S., & Martens, G.G. (1989). *Preparing Course Syllabi for Improved Communication*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, National Center for Research to Improve Post-secondary Teaching and Learning.
 - Electronic
 - o http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/syllabus/checklist_print.html
 - o http://captain.park.edu/faculty/development/creating_a_syllabus.htm