Syllabus Guidelines

A syllabus is required as part of the documentation submitted for review of all new course applications and of proposals to substantively change existing courses. In addition to forming an important aspect of the review of course proposals, the syllabus is kept by the Office of the University Registrar to aid in documenting the course content for students. Also, students depend on the information to understand what is expected of them in the course. While disciplines will vary in the format and specific content of the syllabus, certain components are important for most courses. Consequently, syllabi typically provide the following information.

1. Course description
   1. Logistics to obtain necessary materials and assistance
   2. Learning/intellectual content
   3. Learning objectives
   4. Characteristics of class meeting (online, lecture-based, seminar, etc.)

2. Course assessment/expectations
   1. Explicit description of types of assessments, including method (points, percentages, etc. for each type of assignment) and general criteria (participation, improvement, content correctness, etc.)
   2. List of assignments with estimated due dates and scope
   3. Course policies and values
      a. Accommodation
      b. Academic integrity
      c. Inclusivity
      d. Technology Protocol
      e. Strategies for success

As the use of learning management systems to convey course information becomes more common, the syllabus may no longer be one document but rather a series of webpages, but the components of a complete syllabus should still be readily available to students.

In addition, two aspects of course assessment are important to consider—participation and extra credit.

Participation: While most instructors understand the need for explicit guidelines regarding how assignments, such as term papers, will be graded, the rubric for participation can be overlooked. Generally, students cannot be assessed for their behavior and attendance is considered a behavior (See Faculty Resource of Grading at https://depts.washington.edu/grading/conduct/grading.html). Students may be assessed on their participation in the classroom as long as the rubric used to assess the quality of that participation is explicit (i.e., described in detail in the syllabus) and not based solely on attendance. In courses where the pedagogy requires that
more than 15% of the course grade be based on in-class participation, the assessment rubric is critical so that students understand what is expected of them. Best-practice examples and other information can be found at the Center for Teaching and Learning website: http://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/.

Extra credit: Extra credit is discouraged. Should it be used, extra credit opportunities must be offered judiciously and not as a replacement for primary course material. Such opportunities are to be:

- fair; that is, available to all students equally;
- not dependent upon a specific time outside the regularly scheduled class period (e.g. attending a specific talk or performance);
- not dependent upon the ability to travel to or from specific locations (e.g. attending a specific talk or performance);
- not dependent upon the expression of political or social interest (e.g. caucusing, voting, watching a debate, volunteering); and
- made explicit in the syllabus.

In no event should extra credit be offered to only a subset of students. If an extra credit opportunity cannot be feasibly completed by any student in a class, the instructor should offer an alternate but commensurate opportunity to that student.

Peer evaluation: Peer evaluation must be used judiciously and in moderation. Peer evaluation may not replace grading by the instructor; while peer evaluation may be included in a grading rubric, students are not to assign grades to other students.