

Designing Course Syllabi: Requirements

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All instructors at California College of the Arts should have an up-to-date syllabus for each course they teach. This must be given to students and filed with the Office of Graduate or Undergraduate Studies. Each syllabus should include the following elements:

- **Course Title and Number** – List the course title, program code and course number (e.g. PHOT0408, GRAD0821), and include the semester and year.
- **Instructor Information** – Provide instructor's first and last name, contact information, office hours (if applicable) and email address. A brief faculty bio is optional. Specify how and when you prefer to be contacted by students.
- **Course Description** – Provide the description from the course catalogue, including pre-or co-requisites. Faculty members have the option to expand upon the course description, by including the purpose and goal of the course and how the course will be conducted (lectures, small group discussion, project teams, field experiences).
- **Disability statement in your syllabus** - Any student who feels she/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Access & Wellness Services to discuss specific needs. Please contact Suzanne Raffeld, Director of Access & Wellness Services at 510-594-3775, via email at sraffeld@cca.edu, or stop by the office (Irwin Student Center) to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.
- **Learning Outcomes** – List the objectives of the course (normally less than seven)—i.e., what students should know and be able to do when they successfully complete the course.
- **Course Outline** – Outline the course topics, activities, assignments, readings, etc. to be covered during the semester.
- **Assignments & Requirements** – List expectations for numbers and kinds of assignments, such as: projects, papers, research, group work or other assignments that the student will be expected to submit. Note the staging of assignments and assessments across the course. Include museum visits, fieldwork, discussions, participation and critiques where appropriate.
- **Readings and Resources** – All courses, including studio courses, should provide a list of readings. Resources, such as texts, computing, tutoring, librarians or other faculty, should be included. Where students can find readings and resources is also to be stated. For graduate courses, a supplemental bibliography for additional reading is recommended.
- **Materials and Supplies** – List required and recommended equipment, supplies and materials, including where to find them.
- **Evaluation and Grading** – Detail how student effort and learning will be assessed. Clear criteria should be used, specifying how the instructor will know whether students achieved the learning outcomes. List key means of evaluation.
- **School, Department and Class Policies** – The CCA policies regarding Attendance and Academic Integrity are to be included, referring students to the Student Handbook for detailed information. Any policy specific to your program or to an individual faculty member's class must also be clearly written in the syllabus.

Designing Course Syllabi: Functions of a Syllabus

Why create a syllabus? The purpose of writing a syllabus is to define expectations, clearly and in writing at the start of each semester. A well-designed syllabus provides specific information about what is expected of students and what students can expect from the course and the instructor(s). This includes, but is not limited to:

- What students can expect to learn from the class (learning outcomes).
- How much work will be given and when (course requirements and course outline).
- Policies (including attendance, grading, etc) establishing expectations between the program, instructors and students.
- The participation, effort and quality of work expected in order to receive a specific letter grade.

As an agreement or contract defining mutual obligations between instructor and students, your syllabus also speaks for the college. You should realize that this fact gives you responsibilities but also gives you protection against complaints or challenges to your teaching. For example, the conditions, goals, and requirements you state enable program chairs and academic administrators to support your decisions on grades, teaching methods, readings, assignments, and topics of inquiry.

Syllabus Functions: Your syllabus can serve a wide variety of functions that will support and challenge students as they engage in their educational activities. Some functions include:

- 1) Establishing an early point of contact and connection between student and instructor
- 2) Setting the tone for your course
- 3) Describing your beliefs about educational purposes
- 4) Acquainting students with the logistics of the course
- 5) Defining student responsibilities for successful course work
- 6) Helping students to assess their readiness for your course
- 7) Providing a conceptual framework
- 8) Describing available learning resources
- 9) Communicating the role of technology in the course
- 10) Serving as a learning contract