

2. Syllabus Design

Syllabus Checklist

(from the Committee for the Support of Teaching)

Contact Details and Office Hours: instructor's office telephone number, e-mail address, website, office address and office hours.

Course Description and Objectives: short description of the course and the context in which it is taught. Could address teaching methodology and general expectations of students. It would be helpful to describe the knowledge, skills, and/or outlooks which you would like the students to learn or be able to demonstrate as a result of this course.

Course Plan: this is the heart of the syllabus—a detailed list of topics for the semester, perhaps accompanied by a statement that these topics may be amended with student input during the term. Consider including an entry for each class session with projected topics and readings. The Academic Calendar is online on the Registrar's website; please remember "Brandeis Mondays," etc. Some instructors also choose to include in this section brief objectives for sessions and/or questions for study and discussion. For UWS syllabi, this section should include an overview of the four assignments to be completed over the course of the semester with a brief statement of the assignment and learning objectives for each unit. This section often appears in the opening pages of the syllabus in addition to the more detailed schedule of assignments.

Evaluation: explanation of grading, including percentages allocated to elements such as class participation, exams, homework, papers, projects. Normally, these percentages should not change once the course starts. All students in a course must be evaluated the same way (this may include giving all students the same option, e.g., paper vs. exam). It is useful to also announce your policy for missed exams or deadlines (e.g., do you require documentation of the excuse?). If you are going to penalize students who do not attend a certain number of classes, this should be stated explicitly here.

Disabilities: every syllabus must contain the following paragraph:

"If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately."

Academic Integrity: every syllabus must contain a paragraph such as:

"You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University's policies on academic integrity (see <http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai>). Faculty will refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to failure in the course, failure on the assignment in question, suspension from the University and/or educational programs."

Communications: details of class mailing lists, WebCT, class websites and other links, if appropriate. Explain how syllabus changes will be communicated and how students should keep themselves informed.

Course Materials: materials recommended for purchase, including textbooks, case packets and online materials.

Critical Dates: the plan should include dates for exams, homework assignments, papers, projects and presentations. It is important to identify the date of the final exam, if any, which should be in the time

slot the University assigns for that block. Any mandatory exercises outside of scheduled times must also be listed. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee recommends that in-class graded exercises not be scheduled during the last week of classes. Whenever possible, final exams should be held during the official examination period, and other exams, take-home exams or quizzes should be completed before the last week of classes begins. In planning dates, faculty should be sensitive to the religious obligations of their students.

Additional Writing Program Requirements

Conferences: every student *must* attend 3 twenty minute or 4 fifteen minute conferences

Attendance: students lose 1/3 of a letter grade for every absence after their third absence (their second in a once a week course). This works best if there are no excused absences (they can use their three for this). More than six absences will result in a failing grade.

Writing Portfolio: students must turn in a final writing portfolio at the end of the semester. The portfolio should include all writing submitted during the semester—graded essays, and pre-drafts—and a two to three page cover letter discussing the student's work during the semester and his or her goals for continued improvement.