Preparing for the Classroom — Syllabi and Schedules

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Abstract
There are many reasons for developing an accurate syllabus and daily schedule for each class. We investigate both the practical reasons for “why” as well as the mandated reasons (what the University Regulations say should be done). Examples are provided to demonstrate the spectrum of detail to consider, as well as a few “war stories” to fill in the discussion.
Outline

• Definition of Terms
• Some Holistic Reasons for Syllabi/Schedules
• The University Regulations
• Examples to Help Put This All Together
• Conclusions
Definition of Terms

From www.websters.com... with some adaptation

syl·la·bus

n. pl. syl·la·bus·es or syl·la·bi

1. An outline or a summary of the main points of a text, lecture, or course of study.
2. Law. A short statement preceding a report on an adjudged case and containing a summary of the court’s rulings on each point involved.

sched·ule

n. pl. sched·ules

1. A list of times of departures and arrivals; a timetable: a bus schedule; a schedule of guided tours.
2. A plan for performing work or achieving an objective, specifying the order and allotted time for each part: finished the project on schedule.
3. A printed or written list of items in tabular form.
4. a. A program of events or appointments expected in a given time.
   b. A student’s program of classes.
5. A supplemental statement of details appended to a document.
Some Holistic Reasons for Syllabi/Schedules

From the Students’ Perspective

- A condensed overview of...
  - What will be studied and why
  - What prerequisite knowledge and skills are required
  - What physical resources are needed
  - What time must be allotted
  - What counts

From the Instructor’s Perspective

- A condensed overview of...
  - What will be studied and why
  - What prerequisite knowledge and skills are required
  - What physical resources are needed
  - What time must be allotted
  - What counts
More Holistic Reasons for Syllabi/Schedules

From *The UW Handbook for Graduate Teaching Assistants*, by Prof. Emeritus Jim McClurg (out-of-print)

- The most important document for students is the course syllabus, not the course textbook.
- Think of the syllabus as the intellectual argument for the course.
  - When the students understand the argument, they have insights into the course and the instructor’s approach.
- The syllabus should help students use the textbook.
- Characteristics of good syllabi...
  - Detailed precision.
  - Clearly stated course objectives.
  - A day-by-day schedule identifying specific reading assignments and due dates.
  - Clear statements regarding make-up dates, attendance, and grading standards.
  - Time identified when instructors are available.
The University Regulations

On-Line at http://www.uwyo.edu/regs-policies/. Reorganized; all new numbers!

**UW Regulation 2-117 — Course Syllabus Requirement:** Students’ right to receive a written syllabus at the start of the semester; required content of a syllabus.

**UW Regulation 2-102 — Final Examination Policy:** Limitations on what activities can be scheduled during the last week of classes.

**UW Regulation 2-405 — Faculty Office Hours:** For the College of Engineering and Applied Science, a minimum of five hours per week, “open door” policy.

**UW Regulation 2-108 — Student Attendance Policy:** Each instructor must state the attendance policy in the syllabus.

**UW Regulation 2-113 — Grading System:** Meaning of grades and instructor responsibility for filing midterm and end of semester grade reports.

**UW Regulation 2-5 — Teacher Effectiveness Evaluating System:** Policy and procedures regarding formal teacher evaluation.

**UW Regulation 2-114 — Academic Dishonesty:** Definition of and authorized actions and procedures.
Examples to Help Put This All Together

A Checklist (see UW Regulation 2-117, Section III.B., all 20 categories!)

- Instructor info
- Course info
- Course prerequisites
- Course objectives
- Resources (texts, etc.)
- Course requirements
- Use of cell phones, mobile devices

- Office hours/availability
- Expectations of instructor
- Policies (grading, attendance, etc.)
- Disabilities accommodations
- Statement on honesty/collaboration
- Statement on diversity
- Caveat: subject to change

And, a tentative working course calendar (e.g., dates for homework assignments, readings, quizzes, tests, papers, projects and other work)
Conclusions

Develop a Concise Syllabus and Schedule for Every Class

- According to the University Regulations, you must.
- According to learned practice, you should.
- It will set the stage for a positive, collaborative environment in the classroom.
- It will save you time and grief in the future.