

Syllabi and Schedules — contract and roadmap

Cameron H. G. Wright

Dean of the College and Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering

chgw@uwyo.edu

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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
- University Regulations that Affect the Syllabus
- Examples to Help Put This All Together
- Linking to Common Syllabus Categories
- 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

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.

University Regulations that Impact the Syllabus

On-Line at <http://www.uwyo.edu/regs-policies/>. Some changes each year!

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

UW Regulation 2-100 — Academic Class Management: including Final Exam policy; e.g., limitations on what activities can be scheduled during the last week of classes.

UW Regulation 2-106 — Grading System: types and points of grades, instructor responsibility for filing midterm and semester grade reports, clearing “I” grades, etc.

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

UW Regulation 2-114 — Student Academic Dishonesty: Definitions and authorized actions and procedures.

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.

Faculty Office Hours: UW Reg 2-117 says: minimum of 3 hours spread over 2 days of the week. Some variability of amount and method may be necessary due to COVID-19.

Examples to Help Put This All Together

A Checklist (see UW Regulation 2-117, Section III.B., for 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)

To aid in syllabus development, a syllabus template containing required information and sample language is provided at:

<http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/resources/syllabus/index.html>

Additional COVID-19 Syllabus Recommendations for Fall 2020

Note that due to the unusual circumstances we face due to the COVID-19 pandemic, class delivery and student expectations must adapt.

In order to reflect this in your syllabus, Academic Affairs recommends adding some additional information to your syllabus. For example . . .

- COVID-19 Policies
- Syllabus Changes
- HyFlex, Zoom, and WyoCourses expectations
- Information Technology (IT)

See the most recent recommendations at the link on:

<http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs/resources/syllabus/index.html>

Linking to Common Syllabus Categories

Several required standardized syllabus sections, required for every class, are now built into every new WyoCourses shell for each course. This means that rather than including these sections in your individual syllabi, you have the option of directing students to two links in your WyoCourses site.

Classroom Conduct & Behavior—including the following syllabus sections:

- Classroom Behavior Policy
- Classroom Statement on Diversity
- Academic Dishonesty Policies
- Duty to Report

Learning Tools—including the following syllabus sections:

- Substantive Changes to Syllabus
- Disability Support Services
- Student Resources

Will this make these sections seem less important to students? Time will tell. . .

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.