



Syllabus as Communication

Center for Academic Innovation and Faculty
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Syllabus as Communication

- Knowing Your Audience
- Setting the Tone
- Building Academic Resilience
- 10 Take-aways for an Inclusive Classroom



Knowing Your Audience

USC Upstate Students

- 45% identify as a race or ethnicity other than white
- 25% are over 25
- 40% are first-generation college students



Multigenerational Classrooms

- Baby Boomers were authority
- GenX questioned authority
- Millennials are not interested in authority
- GenZ or iGen: What was authority again? Seek social learning and career relevance.



Setting the Tone

- Authority v. Authoritarian
- Growth Mindset and Academic Resilience
- Welcome learners into to the academic Culture of Power
- Road Map for the Learning Journey



Communication Expectations

- Talk about communication to show its importance in the class.
- Tell students when they can expect email or phone responses from you—typically within 24 hours weekdays or 48 hours on weekends.
- Identify when and how you will conduct virtual office hours for those who can't come to campus.



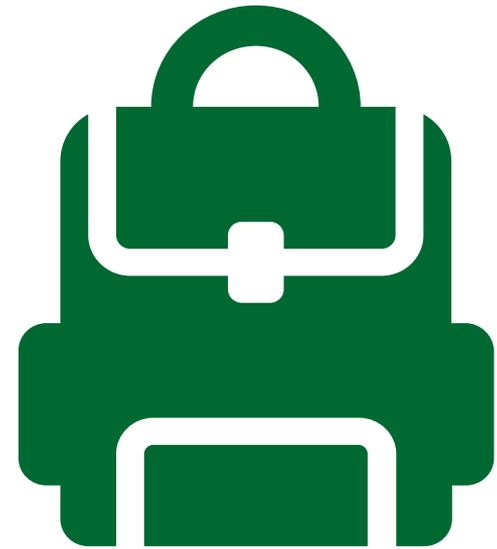
Communication Values

- Share common netiquette guidelines.
- Prepare students for discussion of controversial subjects by laying ground rules for civility, respect, and academic inquiry.
- Show students where in the course to find your contact information and peer contact information for study groups.



Student-Centered Syllabus Language

- Attendance is expected to enable you to work with your peers and with me to achieve learning goals.
- Please come and talk to me.
- The driving question behind this course is... (shows relevance)
- Some of the essential concepts you will encounter are...



Growth Mindset Syllabus Language

- By the end of this course you will be able to...
- We will develop the skills and knowledge you need to...
- Use visuals, say “you” or “we,” know *their* names, use positive language, link to helpful resources, and put their learning center stage.



Equitable Syllabus Language

- Remove hidden barriers (secret rules, assumptions, unstated resource demands)
- Tell the truth about your policies; transparent, solid structure = equity
- Emphasize the benefits of positive behaviors, not the punishments for negative ones.



Inclusive Syllabus Language

- Overcome imposter syndrome by signaling they belong here.
- Point out that you open up the course to multiple voices in multiple ways (small groups, written comments, etc.).
- Be intentional about the importance of diversity in your discipline and your classroom.



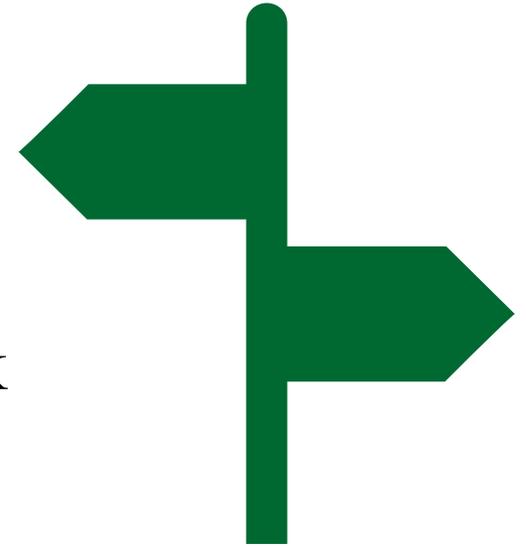
Universal Design for Learning Syllabus Language

- Design with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in mind (alt text for images, color contrast, headings, minimal use of tables).
- Offer access to materials in multiple ways and show students Ally Alternative Formats.
- Provide a full schedule up front for planning (reduces anxiety).



Orienting Syllabus Language

- Clarify where and when they will do assignments.
- Explain the online schedule and routine.
- Point out how they will get feedback from you and where to find it.
- If you are having synchronous meetings, show them where, when, and how to attend.



Sample Syllabus

- [Sample Syllabus for College Success Course](#)
- [Sample Syllabus for Religious Studies](#)

Resources

- ["How to Teach a Good First Day of Class"](#)
- ["How to Create a Syllabus"](#)
- ["How to Make Your Teaching More Inclusive"](#)

For More Information

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