Basic Syllabus Design

Section 1: What does Florida Tech Require?

The Faculty Handbook provides some guidance on the matter of course syllabi. Policy 2549 (Undergraduate Course Syllabi and Textbooks) states:

For each undergraduate course, the instructor should select a textbook and prepare a syllabus. The syllabus will be given to the student at the first meeting of the course. The instructor should, at a minimum, cover all the material listed in the syllabus and use the selected textbook for out-of-class reading. If the instructor cannot adhere to this policy, he/she should report the expected deviations to the academic unit head/program chair immediately. Uniformity, particularly in undergraduate prerequisite courses, helps preserve continuity.

The syllabus should contain:

- Course number (including section number if multi-section course), name and semester
- Instructor’s name and official location, e-mail address (phone ext.)
- Textbook(s) and author(s) name, and edition, if applicable
- A week-by-week list of subject matter to be covered in the course
- Explanation of any term papers, projects or other requirements
- Grading procedures

All syllabi must include the attendance policy. Although there is no university-wide policy regarding penalties for non-attendance, students are expected to attend all classes.

All syllabi should contain a statement on academic honesty.

Copies of all syllabi and handouts must be on file in each academic unit office.
Section 2: What purpose do syllabi serve?

The most fundamental purpose of a syllabus (and the one FIT seems to mostly cover in Policy 2549) is to convey the instructor's course design (e.g., learning objectives, policies, requirements, rules, expectations, materials, etc.). But a syllabus often serves other important functions:

- A syllabus can convey an instructor's enthusiasm for a course and/or the subject matter.
- A syllabus can convey how an individual course fits into a broader context. For example, a syllabus might explain to students how a required English 101 class will help them in future classes and in the workplace.
- A syllabus can set the tone for the course and help define the role of instructor and student.
- A syllabus can help students self-assess their readiness for a course by explaining prerequisite courses, skills, and knowledge.
- A syllabus can provide advice and identify outside resources, so students can better manage their learning.
- A syllabus can help an instructor communicate with colleagues.
Section 3: When in the design process should you create a syllabus?

According to Dr. L. Dee Fink’s “A Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning”, syllabus creation occurs near the end of the course design process. Here is a very brief overview of Fink’s design process. Click the link above for a more thorough explanation.

**Initial Design Phase: Primary Components**

Step 1: Situational Factors

Step 2: Learning Goals/ Objectives

Step 3: Feedback and Assessment Procedures

Step 4: Teaching/Learning Activities

Step 5: Integration of the Primary Components

**Intermediate Design Phase: Assemble Components into a Whole**

Step 6: Course Structure

Step 7: Instructional Strategy

Step 8: Creating the Overall Scheme of Learning Activities

**Final Design Phase: Important Remaining Tasks**

Step 9: Grading System

Step 10: De-Bugging

**Step 11: Write the Syllabus**

Step 12: Course and Teaching Evaluation
Section 4: Some General Advice on Writing Syllabi

- Look at models from successful colleagues.
- Anticipate student questions and concerns. Typically students want to know:
  - Will I be able to do the work?
  - Will I like the professor?
  - Will the subject matter interest me?
  - Is it relevant to what I want to do?
  - Do I have the prerequisite skills and knowledge to succeed?
  - Can I handle the workload?
  - Is it possible for me to get a good grade?
  - What sorts of policies does this instructor have regarding attendance, late work, participation, etc.?
- Make students responsible for everything in the syllabus. A short quiz might motivate students to pay attention to the content.
- Maintain some flexibility in your syllabus.
- Be fair to students. If you make changes to the syllabus, let students know and provide them sufficient time to adjust. Keep any changes minor. Major changes could be viewed as a “bait and switch”
- Personalize your syllabus in some ways.
- Make your syllabus creative, unique, and memorable. On the following pages, examples of creative syllabi will be displayed. Each picture also serves as a link to the original site.
Course Description

Have you ever wondered why humans vary in the way that we do? Or what that variation tells us about a person, a group of people, or humanity as a whole? Biological anthropology—the study of how humans evolved—answers these questions.

This course will trace the origins of humanity from very early primates through extinct hominids to arrive at modern people.

Students in this course will learn the basics of evolutionary theory and genetics, investigate the fossil record, observe contemporary nonhuman primates, and apply this knowledge to understanding of modern human diversity.

ANT2511 counts towards the General Studies natural science requirement, and it is a prerequisite for most upper level courses in biological anthropology.

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CLASS #1

Dear Class,

Basic expectations during our time together as follows:

1. Punctuality and attendance are vital!

2. 5...4...3...2...1... o'clock

3. Late-to-class = 1 absence
   More than one unexcused absence equals a lower grade

You will not be graded on your technical drawing ability. Your grades will be based on your effort and time put toward your work and on-time completion of assignments and final project.

Today we will:

1. Review basic rules of the class and write them down!
2. Watch a 10-minute movie from the 1980s featuring an astronomer and science booster talking about the brain.

Extra credit question:

Based on his accent, what part of North America does he seem to be from?
Course Description and Objectives
In this course, we explore US history since the end of the Civil War & Reconstruction. You will learn about broad themes in the history of modern America, including immigration, race and ethnicity, social and political values, stability and population growth, cultural meanings of freedom, industrialization, cycles of prosperity and recession, popular culture, identity, and sporting events. The course will prepare you for further study in secondary sources, college, and activism and explanations of the policies of the United States and all of the constituencies that are being served.

What's in this syllabus
Here is what we'll cover.

Day 1: Introduction
Day 2: The Civil War
Day 3: The Reconstruction
Day 4: The Gilded Age
Day 5: The Progressive Era
Day 6: The Great Depression
Day 7: The New Deal
Day 8: World War II
Day 9: The Cold War
Day 10: The Vietnam War
Day 11: The Civil Rights Movement
Day 12: The Reagan Era
Day 13: The Bush Years
Day 14: The Obama Years
Day 15: The Trump Administration

Course Requirements
The course is worth 3 credits, and you will need to meet the following requirements.

- **Attendance:** You need to attend all classes, except for special events.
- **Reading:** You need to read the textbook regularly.
- **Assignments:** You need to complete all assignments in a timely manner.
- **Tests:** You need to take all tests on time.
- **Final Exam:** You need to take the final exam on time.

You will also need to fulfill the following requirements.

- **Attendance:** You need to attend all classes.
- **Reading:** You need to read the textbook regularly.
- **Assignments:** You need to complete all assignments in a timely manner.
- **Tests:** You need to take all tests on time.
- **Final Exam:** You need to take the final exam on time.

You can find more information about these requirements in the course syllabus.