

Resource Guide

The Syllabus as a Communication Tool

The syllabus serves as the first impression students will have of course content and assessment. A clear, well-written syllabus can be an invaluable resource for students, while an abstract, incomplete syllabus will often lead to confusion. Svinicki and McKeachie (2014) recommend constructing a syllabus to clearly outline the role of both the student and the teacher. While short and simple might seem more effective in welcoming students and not overwhelming them, Davis (2009) recommends a long and thorough syllabus that is comprehensive but not unnecessarily detailed to the point that it loses intellectual focus. Here are some general strategies Davis suggests keeping in mind while developing a syllabus.

- Understand the multiple roles a syllabus plays.
 - o Source of course information, guide to expectations/prerequisites, statement of relevant university policies, contract, etc.

are likely to be on the minds of students as they enter the classroom.

- Keep the syllabus flexible
 - o Anticipate offering a revised schedule at midterm or final exam time, moving forward/back depending on how quickly the class progresses. Communicate to students of your approach to flexibility (e.g., lectures, assignments, quizzes/exam dates will never change).
- Provide the syllabus as early as possible
 - o This may help students decide if your class is a good fit for their schedule when the semester starts, possibly freeing up slots for more classes. Providing the syllabus helps to accommodate students with disabilities who may need more time to read the syllabus.

Resources

Davis, B. G. (2009). *Tools for teaching*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

McKeachie, W. & Svinicki, N. (14th eds.). [7.43 2.663 0 Td (,)Tj 0.261 0 Td ()Tj -0.002 Tc 0.002 Tw 0.196 0 Td (53)]