Developing a Course Syllabus

Before crafting your University of Toronto course syllabus:

1. Always check with your **own division or home unit** first to identify the relevant local policies and procedures that need to be considered or applied when designing a syllabus for your course. **NOTE: Given current measures/precautions being taken in light of COVID-19, checking in with your division and/or unit regarding updated procedures and policies that need to be included in the syllabus is especially critical.**

2. Consult **University of Toronto Libraries (UTL)** for assistance with identifying and arranging access to course readings, including clarification of copyright issues. UTL offers a **Syllabus Service** that assists instructors with making course readings available to students in a manner that respects Canadian copyright law and existing U of T licensing agreements and policies. Library staff will retrieve, scan, and provide links to material, as well as acquire eBooks suitable for course use whenever available. See the UTL website for more information and deadlines for submitting course syllabi to the syllabus service:
https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/copyright/course-readings-and-reserves- support

3. Consult the **Accessible Campus** web site for information on how to design an accessible course syllabus. Note that, per the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act or AODA, any course-related information for post-secondary courses in Ontario (e.g., a course syllabus) must be provided in accessible formats.

4. Note whether you need to include in your syllabus a prepared statement from this selection of SAMPLE STATEMENTS FOR YOUR COURSE SYLLABI found later in this document. Such statements can help provide clear and consistent messaging to your students, and can help signal your awareness, around key issues such as equity, accessibility and accommodation, as well as privacy and academic integrity.

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ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Course syllabi vary widely in length, format, content, and style. Where possible, the syllabus should be made available to students in both hard copy and online formats. All course syllabi should incorporate the following key information.

Administrative details	- Course name, number and designator (e.g., ENG 100F – Effective Writing) - Your name and contact information (e.g., office location and office hours, instructor or course web site address, email address) [Note: instructors are not required to provide their personal phone number to students but may do so at their own discretion] - If teaching mostly or entirely online/remotely, consider holding virtual office hours – designate specific times when students can reach you for one-on-one real-time online chats or full-class or small group online question-and-answer sessions - Teaching Assistant (TA) name and contact information (as applicable) - Lab Technician name and contact information (as applicable) - If teaching entirely or partly online/remotely: - provide information on how students should access course information and the minimum technical requirements/equipment they need to connect to and participate fully in the course - share what online tools and/or apps students are expected to use, and guidelines on how to use them - provide clarity on what elements of the course are asynchronous (i.e. what the students will complete on their own time and at their own pace, within established coursework timelines, e.g. online modules or readings) and which are synchronous (i.e. any real-time activities, such as webinars, that the students are expected to participate in) - During the COVID-19 pandemic, if teaching in-person: - first consult any institutional (e.g. Environmental Health & Safety), divisional or departmental guidelines that apply to on-campus teaching - familiarize yourself with the space you will be teaching in to note any updates to classroom features that need to be communicated to students - provide information on safety protocols for in-class work, as appropriate, e.g. physical distancing measures, the need to wear a mask, etc., per established guidelines

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Course description	• A brief paragraph describing the main focus and broad goals of the course – indicate the 2-3 "big ideas" of the course and the key skills to be developed • Student learning outcomes – what can students expect to know and be able to do by the end of the course? See the CTSI website for guidance on crafting learning outcomes: https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/course-design/developing-learning-outcomes/ • Requirements for the course (e.g., pre-requisites, language requirements) • Indicate whether the course is a pre-requisite for upper level courses
Required texts or readings	• Provide the details of any required readings for the course, including where students can obtain copies • Consult the Library for assistance with making course readings available, as noted above • Indicate if any of the course readings have been placed on short term loan • You may also wish to include additional recommended readings • Indicate what material is also (or exclusively) available within the institutional learning management system, Quercus, or the equivalent online course portal (if applicable)

Links to relevant policies and learning supports	• Wherever possible, provide direct links to relevant resources and University offices where students can locate essential information to support their academic success and personal well-being.
	• See the CTSI website for lists of relevant links to consider including on your syllabus:
	   o General supports for students: https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/u-of-t-resources/teaching/students/
	   o Preparing students for online learning: https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/strategies/continuity-planning/5-tips-for-students/
	   o Grading-related policies and resources: https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/u-of-t-resources/grading-practices-policies-uoft/

COURSE WORK AND GRADING

Instructors should provide a clear breakdown of the work required in the course, including due dates and assignment weights. In addition, instructors should provide an overview of each assignment and its assessment criteria. (This information can be included in the course syllabus or provided in more detail within an "Assignment" section in Quercus and/or on a separate handout.)

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

This may be included under course work or in the grading portion or in the week-by-week breakdown

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(see below), or you might remind students in a separate section on course workload. You can also include information about required outings or special events (e.g., a field excursion or special invited guest lecture).

COURSE/DEPARTMENTAL/DIVISIONAL POLICIES

- Instructors may wish to outline departmental, divisional, or their own policies regarding:
    - expectations for participation and attendance
    - deadlines for assignment submissions
    - use of the learning management system (Quercus) or equivalent online course portal
    - use of video-conferencing platforms (e.g., Microsoft Teams or Zoom) and norms for participating in synchronous (live) sessions
    - submission methods (e.g., in person or electronically through Quercus)
    - extensions or penalties for late work
    - process for requesting re-grading of course work, if applicable
    - process for signaling course absences and requesting make-up tests or exams, if applicable
      NOTE: during the COVID-19 pandemic, the University is temporarily suspending the need for a doctor's note or medical certificate for absences from academic participation; students should use the **Absence Declaration tool on ACORN** to declare an absence if they require consideration for missed academic work; students are responsible for contacting instructors to request the academic consideration they are seeking; students should record each day of their absence as soon as it begins, up until the day before they return to classes or other academic activities
    - appropriate use of laptops and/or cell phones during class time
    - course communication policy
        - email response time and guidelines for appropriate email communication
        - online discussion forum response time
        - guidelines for online discussions – both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced posts on discussion boards)
    - academic integrity/plagiarism (not just the consequences, but also how to avoid plagiarizing in the first place – the University maintains a website on academic integrity that may be helpful: https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/)

COPYRIGHT IN INSTRUCTIONAL SETTINGS

If students wish to audio record, video record, photograph, or otherwise reproduce lecture presentations, course notes or other similar materials provided by instructors, they ***must obtain the instructor's written consent beforehand.*** Otherwise all such reproduction is an infringement of copyright and is prohibited. In the case of private use by students with accommodation needs, the instructor's consent will not be unreasonably withheld, but the student must have registered for the accommodation through Accessibility Services (see "Adaptive Technology and Assessment"). See the CTSI website for additional information on:

- Copyright considerations - https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ed-tech/audio-video/copyright-considerations/
- Privacy considerations - https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ed-tech/audio-video/privacy/

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- Sample statements to include in a course syllabus about the recording of course activities - https://teaching.utoronto.ca/ed-tech/audio-video/sample-statements/

RECORDING ONLINE COURSE MEETINGS (CAPTURING VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDINGS OF VIDEO-CONFERENCES, WEBINARS, ETC.)

In a course where synchronous online elements are being offered via video-conferencing platforms, instructors may have pedagogical reasons for wanting to record the video or audio feed from the sessions. Such reasons may include a need to capture the questions shared in the online chat for later follow-up, or the need to record a presentation that students deliver in fulfillment of a course requirement, etc. However, instructors must be aware that if it is necessary for pedagogical reasons to video/audio record during an online course meeting, ***students must be informed in writing before the course begins.*** Since recordings of meetings with students can be considered a collection of their personal information, such recordings are governed by privacy considerations as laid out in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, or FIPPA.

With this in mind, the Office of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy at the University of Toronto has prepared two possible statements for the course syllabus, either one of which can be used to notify students of the intention to record online course meetings. Note that a notification statement is required in any course where the recording of video or audio from an online course meeting is to occur, and applies even if the recording is only live-streamed and not stored. Note as well that any recordings that are to be stored for later access must be stored on an official secure University system (e.g. Quercus) with a secure means of access, not on publicly-accessible sites.

Instructors are strongly encouraged to include one of two possible statements in their course syllabus, and in their Quercus course shell, if intending to record online course meetings. See the section below

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On Notification to Students if Recording Online Course Meetings**.**

STUDENT SUPPORT AND ACCOMMODATION

Note any relevant academic and personal support services (for example, campus or college writing centres, counseling services, study centres, family care offices for students with parental responsibilities, etc.) and include a statement that reminds students who require accommodation to register with Accessibility Services: https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as/register-accommodation.

See below for some sample statements that can be included in your syllabus to further signal a welcoming and supportive course environment for your students.

WEEK-BY-WEEK BREAKDOWN OF IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Instructors may wish to provide a weekly breakdown of the material to be covered in class or online (and in tutorials, if applicable). Again, if teaching a fully online course or a dual delivery course where both online and face-to-face teaching and learning will occur, be clear about which components are synchronous (real-time) versus asynchronous (self-paced) as well as the timing and details for the synchronous elements. Required and recommended readings may also be highlighted. It can be helpful for students to see in this same schedule when assignments are due, and also when work on key assignments should be *started*, to help students (especially first year students) with time management.

USING YOUR SYLLABUS AS A LEARNING TOOL

Your syllabus can be an important source of information about the course material and about learning in your field. This approach involves moving beyond a document that exclusively lists rules and due dates towards a course guide that invites students into the subject area and the broader discipline, and generates excitement for the learning to come. You can develop a syllabus that describes:

- **Course goals and outcomes.** This might include an outline of the disciplinary content and skills that students will learn through the course, but might also address broader skills or topics (e.g. research methodology) that may contribute to or draw on other courses or fields of study.

- **Key topics and the ways in which they are connected and prioritized**. This can even be presented graphically, via a "course map": See Nilson, L. (2007). *The graphic syllabus and the outcomes map: Communicating your course*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.

- **The ways in which information can be organized, evaluated, and debated in your field.** You might provide a brief overview or some background to the study of the topic itself (for example, when it emerged as a field or formalized discipline, different ways in which it has been researched and taught), some history of the course (for example, new topics or sections that have been added or eliminated, new teaching methods or elements of course), or some information about how to perform scholarly work in the discipline (for example, an introduction to how to read particular kinds of texts or sources within the course, how to evaluate materials and sources external to the course through the lens of the discipline, and/or how to apply the course material in different contexts).

Together, these elements create what is often referred to as a "learner-centred" syllabus. For more tips

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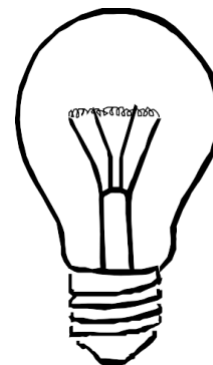TORONTO   CENTRE FOR TEACHING SUPPORT & INNOVATION

on using your syllabus as a learning tool, see the web site of the *Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CELT)* at Iowa State University at http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/preparing-to-teach/how-to-create-an-effective-syllabus or additional references are noted in the list of resources at the end of this guide.

OPTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You might also want to include some or all of these additional pieces of information to help your students prepare for the course:

- A description of your expectations for course activities, for example:
    - what meaningful in-class or online participation looks like
    - what successful preparation for in-class or online activities and assignments involves
    - what a reasonable work pace might be, including suggested timelines for keeping up with weekly course work and preparing assignments
    - the process for requesting additional feedback on course work
- Any additional supplies, materials, or equipment that are required or might help students succeed in the course
- Responses to "Frequently Asked Questions" about the course or the course material
- Your personal teaching philosophy statement and a description of your own pedagogical approaches/instructional strategies
- Other information about your own research area or your own interest in and connection to the course topic

SAMPLE STATEMENTS FOR YOUR COURSE SYLLABI

The following statements may be included on your course syllabus. For assistance in drafting additional statements, please feel free to contact the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation at ctsi.teaching@utoronto.ca.

On Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:
- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor in all relevant courses
- Making up sources or facts
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment

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On tests and exams:
- Using or possessing unauthorized aids
- Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test
- Misrepresenting your identity

In academic work:
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes

Sample statement to include in the syllabus and in your Quercus course shell:

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources (for example, the University of Toronto website on Academic Integrity, http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/).

On the University's Plagiarism Detection Tool:

The University's plagiarism detection tool will assist in detecting textual similarities between compared works. This tool is an efficient way to identify common writing issues and deter plagiarism in course assignments.

Note that the tool does not identify plagiarism; it is up to the individual instructor to determine if passages highlighted by the tool represent plagiarism. Instructors using this tool can create an Assignment in their Quercus course to which students submit their assignments electronically for analysis. **With the integration of the plagiarism detection tool into Quercus courses, instructors and students should *not* access the program through the company's website.**

Before using this tool instructors must adhere to U of T's plagiarism detection tool **Conditions of Use.** Key things to note about using this tool:

- Students **must be informed at the start of the course** that the instructor will be using this tool. Ideally, a notice about use of the tool and guidance for using the tool should appear in the course syllabus.
- *The course syllabus must include the following statement (as is):*

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).

For more information on the plagiarism detection tool please send a query to q.help@utoronto.ca.

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On Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

The University welcomes and includes students, staff, and faculty from a wide range of backgrounds, cultural traditions, and spiritual beliefs.

Instructors are strongly encouraged to include the following statement in their course syllabus and in their Quercus course shell:

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

On Notification to Students if Recording Online Course Meetings

The FIPP Office at U of T has prepared the following two statements for instructors needing to inform students of their intention to record audio or video feeds during online course meetings. This language is intended to accomplish two objectives:

a) To notify students that their participation in an online course will be recorded

b) To provide options for faculty to inform students of appropriate use for course materials

Instructors are strongly encouraged to include one of the following statements, as applicable to their course, in their course syllabus and in their Quercus course shell if intending to record online course meetings.

OPTION 1: Notice of video recording and sharing (download and re-use prohibited)

This course, including your participation, will be recorded on video and will be available to students in the course for viewing remotely and after each session.

Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation and are protected by copyright. Do not download, copy, or share any course or student materials or videos without the explicit permission of the instructor.

For questions about the recording and use of videos in which you appear, please contact your instructor.

OPTION 2: Notice of video recording and sharing (download permissible; re-use prohibited)

This course, including your participation, will be recorded on video and will be available to students in the course for viewing remotely and after each session.

Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation and are protected by copyright. In this course, you are permitted to download session videos and materials for your own academic use, but you should not copy, share, or use them for any other purpose without the explicit permission of the instructor.

For questions about the recording and use of videos in which you appear, please contact your instructor.

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On Accommodation:

Additionally, you may wish to include statements in your syllabus that reference the University's policies and resources related to accommodations for students with different needs and religious backgrounds. Below are some sample statements for your consideration.

Students with disabilities

Possible statement:

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services* office.

*insert contact information for relevant campus office:

Accessibility Services on the St. George campus

Accessibility Services on the UTM campus

AccessAbility Services on the UTSC campus

Religious observances

For more information, and to link to the University's policy on accommodations for religious observances, please see the web site of the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students: https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/policies- guidelines/accommodation-religious/

Possible statement:

The University provides reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences and instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations or other compulsory activities at these times.

Please reach out to me as early as possible to communicate any anticipated absences related to religious observances, and to discuss any possible related implications for course work.

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Family care responsibilities

The following statement was prepared by the [Family Care Office](#) at U of T and can be adapted for use by instructors in their course syllabus to signal awareness of the demands that family care can have on students.

> The University of Toronto strives to provide a family-friendly environment. You may wish to inform me if you are a student with family responsibilities. If you are a student parent or have family responsibilities, you also may wish to visit the Family Care Office website at familycare.utoronto.ca.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Altman, H. B., & Cashin, W.E. (1992). Writing a Syllabus. *IDEA Paper #27*. Manhattan, KS: Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development, Kansas State University. PDF of full text available from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED395539.

Colhoun, S. & Becker, A. (2008). How students use the course syllabus. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *2* (1), 1 – 12.

Cullen, R. & Harris, M. (2009). Assessing learner-centredness through course syllabi. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 34* (1), February 2009, 115-125.

Davis, B.G. (2009). The comprehensive course syllabus. In *Tools for Teaching. 2nd ed.* San Franciso: Jossey-Bass, 21-36.

Harrington, C.M., Gabert-Quillen, C. (2015). Syllabus length and use of images: An empirical investigation of student perceptions. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*, *1* (3), 235-243.

Ludy, M.J., Brackenbury, T., Folkins, J.W., Peet, S.H., Langendorfer, S.J. and Beining, K. (2016). Student impressions of syllabus design: Engaging versus contractual syllabus. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *10* (2), Article 6.

Nilson, L. B. (2003). *Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors. 2nd ed.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Nilson, L. B. (2007). T*he Graphic Syllabus and the Outcomes Map: Communicating Your Course.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Palmer, M.S., Wheeler, L.B., Aneece, I. (2016). Does the document matter? The evolving role of syllabi in higher education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *48* (4), 36- 47, DOI:10.1080/00091383.2016.1198186.

Richmond, A. (2016). *IDEA Paper #60*. Constructing a learner-centered syllabus: One professor's journey. Retrieved August 20, 2018 from https://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/PaperIDEA_60.pdf

Richards, S.L. (2001). The interactive syllabus: A resource-based, constructivist approach to learning. Retrieved August 20, 2018 from *Educause* website at https://library.educause.edu/resources/2001/1/the-interactive-syllabus-a-resourcebased-constructivist-approach-to-learning.

OTHER INTERESTING RESOURCES:

Open Syllabus Project: https://opensyllabusproject.org/