

**Center for Instructional
Development and Research**

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Information for People who Teach
at the University of Washington

Planning the Course Syllabus

The form and content of a syllabus vary widely by discipline, department, course, and instructor. In all cases, however, the syllabus provides the instructor and students with a common reference point that sets the stage for learning throughout the course. This CIDR Bulletin identifies components that are commonly included in a syllabus. For more information and examples taken from courses at UW, see <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/syllabus/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- *Course Content:* What is the basic content of the course, and what makes it important or interesting? How does the course fit into the context of the discipline?
- *Learning Objectives:* What should students be able to do by the end of the course? Objectives are most helpful when they are expressed in terms of knowledge and skills that can be readily identified and assessed.

For example, the ability to recognize, differentiate, apply, or produce is much more readily identifiable than the ability to appreciate or understand.

- *Characteristics of Class Meetings:* What types of activities should students be prepared for? Discussion? Lecture? Small groups? Student presentations?
- *Logistics:* What are the instructor's and TAs' names? How can they be contacted? How are course materials obtained? When and where does the class meet?

COURSE TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- *Schedule of Topics and Readings:* What will the main topics of the course be and when will they be addressed? What will students need to do to prepare for each class?

Most instructors include a weekly or daily schedule of topics they intend to address, along with a list of assigned readings and other course materials.

- *Assignments, Projects, and Exams:* How will students demonstrate their learning? Include learning goals, estimated scope or length, assessment criteria, and dates.

Instructors typically include a breakdown, in point values or percentages, of how much each assignment or test contributes to a student's final grade.

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COURSE POLICIES AND VALUES

What values will shape your teaching in the course and what policies will guide you? Policies and values that you might want to communicate through your syllabus include:

- **Inclusiveness:** How can your syllabus help you create an inclusive atmosphere that welcomes all students?

Some instructors include statements inviting participation from all students, honoring student diversity and differing points of view, or inviting requests for disability accommodations.

- **Integrity:** What are policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and misconduct in relation to materials and assignments for this course?

For example, considering the types of work you are asking students to do, what do you want to communicate about working with data? representing original sources? accountability for contributions to group projects?

- **Responsibility:** What do students need to know about your expectations regarding assignments, attendance, online participation, or classroom interactions?

Other possibilities include policies regarding late work, make-up exams, and preparation for class participation.

- **Expectations for Success:** How can students learn most successfully in your course? In your syllabus, you can express your confidence that all students are capable of doing well, and you can suggest strategies for success.

For example, what strategies for learning are particularly important for this material? What resources – such as study centers, web tutorials, or writing centers – are available to help students succeed in your course?

HOW CAN CIDR HELP?

If you would like to consult with CIDR as you develop your course or prepare your syllabus, call 543-6588 or send a message to info@cidr.washington.edu.



Center for Instructional Development and Research

CIDR promotes excellence in teaching and learning at the University of Washington through its work with individual faculty and TAs, departments, campus-wide initiatives, and University leaders. CIDR staff are available year-round to collaborate on the design, implementation, and assessment of ways to advance teaching and learning for all students in the diverse UW community. Consultations are confidential and offered at no charge to UW faculty, TAs, and departments.

If you have questions about teaching and learning, or you would like to find out more about working with CIDR, you can call us at 543-6588, send a message to cidr@u.washington.edu, or visit our web site:

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