Adapting Your Syllabus for Hybrid and Online Teaching

As with in-classroom instruction, a high quality syllabus for remote teaching includes a course plan with clearly articulated learning objectives, assessments and learning activities that are aligned. In addition it is well organized and student-centered. Online delivery, however, presents unique challenges that should be addressed in the syllabus. For example, students report more ambiguity in an online class and there are areas in which you need to be more transparent and explicit. On the other hand, you are able to use technology to organize the syllabus and use links to simplify it.

How do Components Differ in an Online Syllabus?

Since students will have access to the Canvas course before meeting you— your course syllabus is their "first impression" of you. Therefore, it is even more important to make your syllabus personable, informative, and extra clear on how they can reach you, and get help. In courses that are fully online, you don't have the regular meetings in which to check up on students and make sure they are on the right track, so you need to be more intentional with your communication and check-ups. Below is a Basic Syllabus Checklist adapted to an online or hybrid course. The changes are indicated in the right column.

	Basic Syllabus Checklist	Additional Elements for Online/Hybrid Syllabus
☐	**Course Information -** course title & number, discipline, semester & year, credits; meeting days, times & location, any prerequisites (i.e. assumed/required prior knowledge or courses)	Include days and times for both synchronous and asynchronous components, include videoconferencing links.
☐	**Instructor Information**- contact information for instructor(s) of record and all instructional assistants and/or GSIs, including email, office hours/location[1], etc.	This section could also include a link to your Canvas Profile, and it should explain Virtual Office Hours If applicable (times and instructions for joining)
☐	**Course resources -** Canvas site or course website; and required texts/software or other materials.	Highlight technology requirements - methods and devices for accessing and participating in the course (e.g. laptop/mobile, internet access, microphone, webcam, etc.) Also, include a link to Canvas student training and resources.
☐	**Course Description** - explain the course's scope and purpose, relevance to students' academic/professional goals, and major deliverables (e.g., project, presentation, paper, exhibit).	Include how the online classroom is organized and brief module descriptions.
☐	**Course Goals and Learning Objectives** - articulate the course-level learning objectives, outcomes, and/or competencies that students should be able to do after successfully completing the course.	
☐	**Learning Activities and Teaching Methods -** describe the course format (e.g., lecture, recitation, lab, studio, and what teaching methods you will use to engage students in achieving the learning objectives. Reflect on teaching methods that will be a part of every	Include whether the course is fully online, blended,or HyFlex. What modalities will you use (synchronous or asynchronous). Explain the course logistics that will make the course run smoothly. For example, when new

	class period as well as those that may be used at specific times during the course.	materials are published on Canvas, and a suggested schedule for student engagement with those.
☐	**Assessments & Feedback** - - describe the assignments that students need to complete as part of the course (e.g. homework, exams, papers, projects, etc.), and how the instructor will provide feedback to the students.	If your assignments are described on Canvas, then links to the assignments suffice, instead of full descriptions. If your assignments will be submitted outside of Canvas, then provide instructions for how to submit assignments (e.g. how to name the files and label the emails; what kinds of documents will you accept, etc.) Consider using a mixture of assessments. Try to incorporate more low stakes assessments as opposed to high stakes summative assessments.
☐	**Grading & Evaluation -** Include components of the final grade, weights assigned to each course element, grading on a curve or scale, etc. Provide ways that students can easily calculate or find their grades at any point in the course.	
☐	**Course Management and Policies** - clearly communicate your expectations ~~and university policies~~ around ● professional behavior in class ● classroom climate and inclusion ● attendance, engagement, participation ● academic integrity, including collaboration and plagiarism ● late or make-up work, and re-grading requests ● accommodations for students with disabilities ● accommodations for religious holidays	Include expectations around ● Course participation/engagement ● Netiquette ● Include links to relevant campus policies (instead of copying the text). ● Statements regarding (see examples under "Additional Considerations"): ○ privacy concerns during class recordings ○ COVID-19 acknowledgement, contingency plans, and safety
☐		**Course Communication** Specify what communication methods should be used for what purpose, and how frequently you will check each. Examples include: when will Canvas Announcements go out?, Where to submit questions about content? About assignments? About technical issues? How frequently will you check email, Piazza, Discussion Forums, Chat, etc.? How soon should students expect a response from you or your teaching team?
☐	**Resources for Student Success** ● How can a diverse group of students succeed in this course? ● Study Tips and resources that could help increase students' success ● Statement encouraging student wellness with relevant campus resource	**How to Succeed in this course** provides access to learner success resources (technical help, orientation, tutoring), Contact information for technical support. Note the time requirements to be successful in an online learning environment.
☐	**Course Schedule -** outline the course week by week. Include content, activities and assignments with due dates.	You can use the course schedule automatically generated by the Canvas Syllabus Tool. This schedule is called "Course Summary" and is automatically generated based on assignments and events within a Canvas course.

Additional Considerations

- If your syllabus is fully online, make sure you **provide a printable syllabus** for students (e.g. a PDF).
- **Check the links** each semester to make sure they still work, and maybe provide students with multiple links for the same type of information.
- Many instructors find that **holding online office hours** is less effective than asking students to request a meeting and finding a mutually acceptable time. Faculty have successfully used appointment slots on Google calendar to let students (or groups of students) sign up for a time when they are available. Some instructors have mandatory check-in meetings weekly. Providing more than one option for contacting you, as well as stating how quickly you will respond to requests for a meeting signals to students that you are accessible.
- Keep in mind **time-zone differences**. If your assignments are due at midnight students need to understand whether that means midnight in the eastern time zone and 11pm in their time zone or if it means midnight in their respective time zone. Clarifying time zones for synchronous activities is also critical as time differences are not something most people think about on a regular basis.
- **Make sure students understand the pace of the course** from the beginning to help set realistic expectations for their participation. If you have 1-week modules with more than one regularly occurring due date (for example, initial discussion posts are due every Friday and quizzes are due every Sunday) it is critical for them to understand the pace and rhythm in that first week.
- Address **privacy concerns during class recordings**: Consider this **language from ITS**: "Course lectures may be audio/video recorded and made available to other students in this course. As part of your participation in this course, you may be recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, please contact [instructor/GSI email address] the first week of class (or as soon as you enroll in the course, whichever is latest) to discuss alternative arrangements." and: "Students are prohibited from recording/distributing any class activity without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student's own private use. Please let me know if you have any questions."
- Consider **acknowledging the challenging times** due to the pandemic. For example: *"Students and instructors are all adjusting to the changes and regulations that have been put in place this semester in response to COVID-19. I hope that we will all work together as a community to adapt to these times and this new situation as best as we can. I have tried to add flexibility to our course structure and assignments to accommodate anyone who may now be lacking resources they originally thought they would have available. However, if you have suggestions for how we might support your learning in this course, during these trying times, please do not hesitate to let us know."*
- Consider this language regarding **the use of face masks:** *"In accordance with Gov. Whitmer's executive order on face coverings, all persons are required to wear face coverings when entering enclosed public spaces, including campus buildings and workspaces, where social distancing cannot be maintained. Therefore, if you arrive to class without a face mask, you will be asked to leave."*
- If your course is hybrid, consider a statement around **Course Continuity/Contingency Plan**. For example, *"In the case that we have to move class completely online due to unforeseen circumstances (like the Covid-19 Pandemic), we will "meet" via a combination of Zoom synchronous class meetings, small group Zoom sessions with the instructor, and asynchronous Canvas activities. We will adapt the class as best we can to maintain the same level of learning experience, while prioritizing your safety and stability. If we must utilize a course continuity plan, you will receive a detailed revised course schedule and clear instructions for how to proceed with the course."*

The Canvas Syllabus Tool

The Syllabus Tool on Canvas has two parts. The top part is for inserting text and media as you would in any other Canvas Page (using the editor). The bottom part is an automatic Course Schedule (termed Course Summary in Canvas). As you put due dates in published Assignments, Discussions, and Quizzes, they are automatically listed at the bottom of the Syllabus Tool Page, and they are added to the Canvas Calendar. When you change a date in one place it is automatically updated everywhere else in the course. Using these automatic schedule tools ensures consistency and avoids students finding different due dates for the same assignment. Visit how to use the syllabus

tool on Canvas for more details. Remember to also provide a downloadable and printable version of the syllabus for students (you could add a link to a pdf file). **The Course Summary is enabled by default**, but you can disable the Course Summary if you decide not to use it.

References:
- Nexus Minimum Quality Standards - https://facultyresources.nexus.engin.umich.edu/minimum-quality-standards/
- Organizing Syllabi for Online Courses: IU - Teaching Online
- CAI planning guide - https://onlineteaching.umich.edu/creating-your-syllabus-for-an-online-class/
- Pasadena Online and Hybrid Course Syllabus Template - http://online.pasadena.edu/faculty/files/2012/02/Online-Syllabus-Template-CANVAS-New-Login.pdf
- IU Teaching Online: Organizing Syllabi for Online Courses - https://canvas.ucdavis.edu/courses/34528/pages/organizing-syllabi-for-online-courses?module_item_id=4985