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# The NU course syllabus : expectations and possibilities

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# The NU Course Syllabus: Expectations and Possibilities

#### **Expectations: What Every Syllabus Should Include**

- 1. General logistical information:
  - Course number and title, meeting days and times, meeting location(s), lab/studio location
  - Required and/or recommended course materials and where to locate them
  - Course prerequisites
- 2. Contact information for the instructor:
  - Name, office location, office hours, mailing address, phone, email, [web site if applicable]
  - Instructions on how to contact you
- 3. Nature and goals of the course: Mini-orientation to the subject matter, learning goals, and expected outcomes
- 4. Schedule of work and input to students on their success in the course:
  - What is going to happen in the course, what the students have to do, when these
    activities will occur
    - Dates, daily topics, and assignment due dates
    - Exam dates
  - Clarity and completeness are critical in providing a schedule that will enable students to know when things will occur in the course and when their own work will be due.
  - The schedule should allow for early and frequent instructor input to students on their success in the course.
    - Instructors should be aware of the term deadlines for withdrawing from a course without and with a grade (as posted in the term schedule on the registrar's website); they should also make their students aware of these deadlines and might include them on the syllabus.
    - Instructors should be prepared to warn students and their advisors of at-risk performance via FACT (Faculty Advisor Communication Tool); these warnings are critical for identifying students at risk in multiple classes and should be made as soon as possible, and definitely before the fifth week of the term.
    - o Instructors & students should be aware that various types of academic support, including peer tutoring, are available (<a href="http://www.advising.neu.edu">http://www.advising.neu.edu</a>).
- 5. Grading criteria and course policies:
  - At a minimum the syllabus should make clear how much the various assignments will count toward a final grade.
  - In addition students need to know the standards by which individual assignments will be evaluated. This information might be communicated in connection with individual assignments rather than the syllabus; in this case, the syllabus should indicate that the information will be forthcoming.

- Any policies in addition to the catalog policy for all courses (e.g., an absence policy)
- How failure to meet these additional policies will affect the course grade

#### 6. Academic integrity:

- The syllabus should include or refer to the NU Academic Integrity Policy (url below).
   http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academichonesty.html
- Acts of academic dishonesty should be referred to OSCCR (Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution).
- Many instructors report that the Turnitin application (on Blackboard) is useful to identify and document cases of plagiarism.
- If the instructor plans to follow his/her own guidelines for some acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism on a paper) rather than referring all cases to OSCCR (Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution), then the syllabus must define expectations for student behavior (e.g., guidelines on what constitutes plagiarism) as well as how failure to meet the guidelines will affect the course grade.

### 7. Blackboard posting of the syllabus:

- Each course is provided a Blackboard site.
- At a minimum the syllabus should be posted to the Blackboard site.
- Blackboard offers many other possible uses in teaching.
  - o Basic Blackboard instruction is available from NU Information Services.
  - Advanced Blackboard instruction is available from the EdTech Center.

#### Possibilities: Additional Ways the Syllabus Can Serve as a Teaching Tool

- Providing information/advice on how to succeed in the course (e.g., study tips, study guides)
- Clarifying why the course goals are worth achieving; motivational approach to course goals
- Distinguishing subject matter goals and skill development goals
- Describing the purpose of individual assignments; how they contribute to achieving course goals
- Using the style of the syllabus to set the tone for the kind of relationship you think will be most valuable for you (formal vs. informal)
- Providing additional resources related to the course