Constructing Your Course Syllabus
Updated March 2014

The attached checklist and template are designed to assist all instructors in constructing a syllabus. This document outlines all the information you should include in your syllabus along with explanations and suggestions for use.

Your syllabus and, if relevant, online course shell/site should ideally be complete at least one month prior to the beginning of the course.

The syllabus must be distributed to students on the first day of class. Ideally you should distribute it one to two weeks before the first class so students know what is expected of them.

If you are teaching a course for the first time as an online or hybrid course, please make an appointment with Steve Garwood or Denise Kreiger two to three months prior to the beginning of the semester so you have adequate time to prepare your course.

If you want more detail about constructing a syllabus, other good resources about syllabus development and teaching in general may be found at

SC&I’s @5min Video Series from Instructional Design and Technology Services

Center for Teaching Advancement and Assessment Research
[http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/](http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/)

Teaching Assistant Project
[http://taproject.rutgers.edu/](http://taproject.rutgers.edu/)
Syllabus Review Checklist

You can use this checklist to make sure you have all required elements in your syllabus.

__ Instructor’s name and contact info (email, phone, Skype, etc.)
  (Indication of turn-around time for returning email correspondence and assignments is recommended)
__ Instructor’s office hours
  (Indication of how instructor will handle those items usually addressed during office hours)
__ Catalog description of the course
__ Pre- and Co-requisites
__ Course learning objectives (Student focused statements, pre-approved for this course by the school)
  Usually begins with: “After completing the course, students will be able to…”
__ Alignment of assessments (assignments, tests, etc.) with course learning objectives
__ Major readings (including textbooks, with edition #) and information on how to purchase/access them (All textbooks must be available at Rutgers Bookstore)
__ Course website/online course supplement/indication of the Course Management System and how it will be used
__ Methods of assessment
  __ Course grading scale (A = ?, B = ?, etc.), indicating numbers and letter grade
  __ List of assignments/exams with description and point/percent value
__ Course calendar/schedule
  __ Unit/week dates
  __ Topic(s) of unit/class/week
  __ Indication of readings and/or other materials to be complete before class session
  __ Indication of due dates for major assignments and exams
__ Course Policies – minimally include
  __ Attendance/participation (On-campus courses should include University “Self Reporting Absence” information)
  __ Late work (and/or resubmissions)
  __ Laptop/mobile device

__ Academic Integrity notice (can be included in policies section)
__ Library resources
__ Students with Disabilities information
School of Communication and Information

Course Title
Course Number
Semester and Year

Course Delivery: Note if course is fully face-to-face, fully online, or hybrid

Course Website: Give URL

Instructor: FirstName LastName
Email: user@email.com
X-hour turnaround on email correspondence (for online courses, it is recommended that it be 24-hour turnaround)

Office Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Office Hours: Day, time, location; or live chat in online course by appointment; etc.

Instructional Asst: If relevant - FirstName LastName
Email: user@email.com
X-hour turnaround on email correspondence (for online courses, it is recommended that it be 24-hour turnaround)

Office Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Office Hours: Day, time, location; or live chat in online course by appointment; etc.

Catalog Description

What this is: The description of the course as it appears in the University catalog, or a slightly modified version of it.

This is a description of the content of the course as it was approved. You should be able to find this information on the SC&I website, under “Courses” at the top.

Plans to teach the course in a manner that deviates significantly from the approved description should be discussed with the program curriculum committee, director, and/or department chair.

You may wish to include text in your syllabus that describes your personal approach to the course. This is fine, as long as it is in addition to, and not in place of, the catalog description, and both are labeled.
Pre- and Co-requisites

What this is: The number and title of any prerequisite and co-requisite courses, and other prerequisites for enrollment, as listed in the catalog or on the SC&I website.

The best place to find the pre- and co-requisites is in the courses list of the SC&I website.

In some semesters some courses or sections may have special stipulations, such as “this section open only to juniors,” or “enrollment by special permission number only.” Your program director should let you know about these and you can find them on the Online Schedule of Classes. (Go to http://sis.rutgers.edu/soc/ and put in your course number.)

Instructional Objectives (not recommended, but an optional component)

What this is: The goals the instructor has for him/herself in teaching the course.

These are statements of what the instructor expects to present, demonstrate, introduce, review, discuss, or explain.

Learning Objectives (required)

What this is: Goals for what students completing the course will know, think, and do.

The learning objectives should include specific and verifiable statements of how students will demonstrate the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they developed as a result of completing the course. The objectives might suggest what students will be able to identify, explain, examine, compare/contrast, evaluate, test, report on or create by the end of the course. It does not include what students will do as a part of taking the class such as read articles or write papers. Note that the words “understand” and “know” are considered vague as learning objectives because they are not measurable in and of themselves.

The learning objectives section typically begins with the statement “By the end of the course, students will be able to…” and then lists three to five key objectives for the course. It is not meant to be a comprehensive list of everything students will learn. The course learning objectives are active and measurable statements and are listed in the order of Bloom’s taxonomy from lowest order (knowledge) to highest order (create). The learning objectives for each course are part of the curriculum review process in the school and should be available to you from the program director.

If you are teaching an undergraduate course that is part of the Rutgers’ Core Curriculum, it is important to (a) associate specific learning objectives with the Core Curriculum objectives and (b) include assessments aligned with those learning objectives in their approved form. Your program director should give you more information about how this works.
Additional resources on Learning Objectives and Bloom’s Taxonomy can be found by:

- Contacting SC&I’s Instructional Design and Technology Services (IDTS) area via Steve Garwood at sgarwood@rutgers.edu or 848-932-8780
- Viewing SC&I’s @5min video series on:
  - Learning Objectives - http://bit.ly/gYrWi0
- Reviewing the many resources available about developing learning outcomes and assessment strategies on the website of Rutgers’ Center for Teaching Advancement and Assessment Research (CTAAR). http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/assessment/resources.html

Major Readings

*What this is:* The list of all required texts, and how to obtain them. You may also include the list of recommended texts.

If there is a textbook, you should indicate the edition of the book(s) and whether you require that particular edition. When possible it is also helpful to include the ISBN of the book. For articles, make sure to include enough information that students will be able to locate the article. In order to model for your students, you should give full citations of all readings in the accepted format for the class (e.g., APA style).

Please put all textbooks on reserve in Alexander Library. See this page for details: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/reserve_services_for_faculty

If you choose to organize the readings alphabetically, you will need to indicate in another section – e.g., under Organization/Course Schedule or Assignments – which readings should be completed for which class meetings. Alternatively, you may want to arrange the readings chronologically.

Online Course Shell/Site

*What this is:* Information about your use of eCollege or other electronic supplements.

**For classroom-based and hybrid classes:**

You should list the URL for the students so they know where to access the website. Note that Rutgers has both an eCompanion/eCollege and Sakai demo available to help students learn the courseware. (https://ecollege.rutgers.edu/ and http://sakai.rutgers.edu)
You should make clear what participation online is required of students and how you will use the online course supplement.

Adding contact information for technical support will direct students to contact the proper offices rather than asking you:
- Pearson eCollege Learning Studio helpdesk: 877-778-8437 (24 hours, 7 days) or help@ecollege.rutgers.edu
- Sakai helpdesk: 848-445-8721 (Mon-Fri 8am-6pm) or at sakai@rutgers.edu

For fully online classes:

Fully online courses at SC&I should be using the eCollege Course Management System. You can use text such as this:

This is a fully online course which can be accessed through the Rutgers eCollege site at http://ecollege.rutgers.edu starting the first day of class. You will need your Rutgers NetID username and password to log into the eCollege course management system.

Students having login problems are welcome to contact the eCollege Help Desk by phone at 877-778-8437 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or by email at help@ecollege.rutgers.edu if you need technical assistance.

Additional information can be found under the Course Home section in the online course.

Methods of Assessment and Grading

What this is: Tasks that the students must complete for the course, the corresponding learning objectives and the weight of the assignment. An assignment may align with one or several learning objectives, and an assignment may be deconstructed into stages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Corresponding Course Learning Objective</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title of Assignment</td>
<td>Indication of which # course learning objective(s) the assignment corresponds with</td>
<td>% or pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title of Assignment 2 Part A: Title (% or pts) Part B: Title (% or pts)</td>
<td>Indication of which # course learning objective(s) the assignment corresponds with</td>
<td>% or pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>100% or pt total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Make sure to include due dates and exam dates in the Course Schedule section.

This area can also be a great place to indicate your policy or policies on:
• late submissions
• re-submissions
• extra credit, etc.

Additional resources on course and assignment creation and alignment can be found by:
• Contacting SC&I’s Instructional Design and Technology Services (IDTS) area via Steve Garwood at sgarwood@rutgers.edu or 848-932-8780.
• Viewing SC&I’s @5min video series on:

Grading Scale

What this is: An indication of the grade scale that will be used for the course.

Rutgers SC&I allows the following standard grades: A, B+, B, C+, C, D (undergraduate only, not available for graduate students), and F. An F is used for failing work or for a student who has stopped attending class without formally withdrawing.

Temporary grades and incompletes. We use temporary grades in special circumstances when you are willing to allow a student to hand in additional work after the end of the semester. The T/ grade you hand in should be the grade the student has actually earned to date at the end of the semester, and then you can change the grade (upwards) if the student hands in the additional work and it positively affects their grade. An incomplete, IN, can only be assigned to a graduate student who due to unforeseen, and generally emergency, circumstances cannot finish coursework within the given semester; the student then has extra time to complete the coursework and have the grade changed or else the incomplete becomes permanent.

Faculty members may choose to create their own assessment rubric for a class to help them evaluate student achievement. That rubric may include numerical grades. However, every instructor should make it clear to students at the beginning of the semester, on the syllabus given out on the first day of class, how the numerical grades he/she assigns will ultimately translate into a letter grade.

There is no policy at the university, school, or departmental level regarding how numerical scales should be constructed, how many points should be assigned to any particular type of assignment or exam, or how many points should qualify for any particular letter grade. Because each faculty member may create his or her own rubric, it may be the case that in different classes, different numbers of points correspond to different letter grades. Students sometimes construe this difference to imply that it is easier to get a better grade in one course than another based on the scales (e.g., where a 90 is the cut-off for an A versus when 92 is the cut-off for an A), even though it is obviously not true.
There is no policy at the university, school, or departmental level regarding the required grade distribution for any class.

**Key Assignments**

*What this is:* A listing of the key assignments for the course that can be either concise descriptions (with additional handouts made available later), or the full details of assignments. Also included is the grading weight of the assignment.

*Example,*

**Assignment name (X% or Xpts):** Concise, approximately 1-2 paragraph description or full details.

If you have requirements about what information students should put on their assignment cover sheets, such as their own name, your name, the course number, the semester, etc., be sure to be explicit about this. If the assignment will be deconstructed into “stages” (e.g., stages for completing a research paper or a collaborative project), please include information about the stages and how each stage will be graded (points or % of overall assignment).

Either as part of your syllabus or in separate handouts you should indicate your grading rubric, a clear list of the criteria you will use to assess all student work. The criteria for assessments should be based on and aligned with the stated course learning objectives.

If you can give examples of the difference between work that would earn an A, B, C, D, or F that is helpful. Please view our @5min videos for specific examples. Here is an example in standard rubric format that indicates one criterion for a research paper that’s being graded on a 100pt scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Beginning (15-16 points)</th>
<th>Developing (17-19 points)</th>
<th>Accomplished (20-22 points)</th>
<th>Exemplary (23-25 points)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper Focus:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose/Position (Thesis)</td>
<td>Research paper’s central purpose or position statement is generally unclear and paper lacks focus overall.</td>
<td>Research paper’s central purpose or position statement is somewhat unclear and needs to be developed further; focal point is not consistently clear.</td>
<td>Research paper’s central purpose or position statement is apparent and is the focal point of the paper for the most part, but may digress from it on occasion.</td>
<td>Research paper’s purpose or position statement is well-developed, readily apparent, and clearly stated. Consistently maintains the focal point throughout the paper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You should state the relative weight of the different criteria in assigning grades for each assignment. You should state the relative weight of each assignment/exam in calculating the final grade.

Additional resources on rubrics can be found by:
- Contacting SC&I’s Instructional Design and Technology Services (IDTS) area via Steve Garwood at sgarwood@rutgers.edu or 848-932-8780.
- Viewing SC&I’s @5min video series on:
- Strong examples of rubrics from the Association of American Colleges and Universities can be found here: http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics

**Organization of the Course and Course Calendar**
*What this is:* A description of how you will organize the course.

You should list the topics to be covered during the semester in chronological order.

You may choose to integrate the list of topics with a course calendar that lists class meetings, in which case the topics would be listed class-by-class or week-by-week. If you list the topics to be covered without assigning them to specific dates, you will also need to list a class calendar.

Your syllabus should include a course calendar that lists all class meetings or online time periods, readings to be done for those meetings/periods with clear indications of when you expect readings to be done, assignment due dates, and quiz and exam dates. Undergraduate courses should indicate the date and place of the final exam which is scheduled by the university after the reading period. Note that the final exam may take place in a different classroom from the one in which the course is held.

For fully online, hybrid, and web-enhanced courses, the dates listed in the syllabus and course schedule should reflect the same dates/times as are in the course shell in the course management system (e.g., eCollege, Sakai), particularly for assignment due dates/times. Discrepancies between the two can be confusing to students and may result in missed due dates.

**Example:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Title/Topic(s)</th>
<th>What To Do: Activities, and Assignments w/Deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | 1    | x/xx – x/xx | Title/Overview of Subject matter covered in this | • Lectures  
  o Lecture 1  
  • Readings/Videos  
  o Reading 1 |
Late Submission Policy:
What this is: Your requirements for student submissions and how you will handle late submissions. It is also a good idea to indicate in your syllabus your policy on resubmission of assignments and/or extra-credit work.

Example,
Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments, group projects, etc., are due at the time and date listed in the syllabus. If you experience an unavoidable personal situation that prevents you from completing work on time, please inform the instructor prior to the date the work is due. Late work will result in points taken off, a lowering of the assignment grade, and/or an “F,” depending on the assignment.

Attendance and Participation Policy
What this is: Your requirements for student attendance, participation and etiquette, along with information about the university self-reporting site.
Your attendance requirements should reflect the university policy on absences related to religious holidays. You may choose to duplicate the official text of this policy or summarize it:

“It is University policy (University Regulation on Attendance, Book 2, 2.47B, formerly 60.14f) to excuse without penalty students who are absent from class because of religious observance, and to allow the make-up of work missed because of such absence. Examinations and special required out-of-class activities shall ordinarily not be scheduled on those days when religiously observant students refrain from participating in secular activities. Absences for reasons of religious obligation shall not be counted for purposes of reporting. Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule.”

Whether a class is in a physical classroom or online, it is fair to have expectations about student attendance and participation through the semester. Whether a physical class or online, if you are using a course website and have rules about acceptable behaviors in online discussions, or other guidelines, you should state them clearly. For example, if you have rules about discussion etiquette or group communication, these should be stated explicitly.

Please include this text in your syllabus:

"Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes or a period of time in an online class, please use the University absence reporting website - https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ - to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email will automatically be sent to me from this system. Note that if you must miss classes for longer than one week, you should contact a dean of students to help verify your circumstances.”

For a face-to-face course, be sure to state your policy for absences and for make-up exams/labs/assignments. The university preference is that grades not be affected directly by attendance records, but rather by class participation. In general two excused absences per semester are acceptable in a course that meets twice per week.

For a face-to-face course, be sure to state explicitly any rules you have about cell phone or computer use during the class.

For an online course, you may want to define "absence" for the students, e.g., "you will be considered absent from class if you do not engage on the course site during a five day period (or a week, or whatever period you define). In online courses, most student participation is on the discussion boards, so attendance is mainly addressed in the Methods of Assessment section related to participation.
**Library Resources**

*What this is:* It is worth including this information on your syllabus – links to specific library resources and contact information for a librarian who can assist students:

Rutgers University Libraries offer numerous resources to assist students. Librarians can help guide you through research and reference tools. A series of LibGuides are available to get you started. The librarian who specifically supports SC&I is [we can give you the specific individual for the coming year], who is based at the XXX Library, name@email.rutgers.edu, XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Here are some of the LibGuides you may find useful:

- Introduction to Rutgers University Libraries ([http://libguides.rutgers.edu/intro](http://libguides.rutgers.edu/intro))
- Congressional Research ([http://libguides.rutgers.edu/congress](http://libguides.rutgers.edu/congress))
- Journalism and Media Studies ([http://libguides.rutgers.edu/cat.php?cid=34201](http://libguides.rutgers.edu/cat.php?cid=34201))
- Political Science ([http://libguides.rutgers.edu/cat.php?cid=25871](http://libguides.rutgers.edu/cat.php?cid=25871))

**Academic Integrity**

*What this is:* a clear statement about the Rutgers policy on academic integrity and a clear statement about the importance you place on academic honesty. Minimally you should use language such as this in your syllabus:

The consequences of scholastic dishonesty are very serious. Rutgers’ academic integrity policy is at [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/).

Multimedia presentations about academic integrity may be found at [http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html](http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html) and [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_understand_plagiarism_1/0,6622,427064,-00.html](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_understand_plagiarism_1/0,6622,427064,-00.html)

Academic integrity means, among other things:
- Develop and write all of your own assignments.
- Show in detail where the materials you use in your papers come from. Create citations whether you are paraphrasing authors or quoting them directly. Be sure
always to show source and page number within the assignment and include a bibliography in the back.

- Do not look over at the exams of others or use electronic equipment such as cell phones or MP3 players during exams.
- Do not fabricate information or citations in your work.
- Do not facilitate academic dishonesty for another student by allowing your own work to be submitted by others.

If you are doubtful about any issue related to plagiarism or scholastic dishonesty, please discuss it with the instructor.

**Serving Students with Disabilities**

*What this is:* a statement that encourages students with documented disabilities to present their Letters of Accommodation at the beginning of the semester, and a statement that encourages others who do not have documented disabilities but believe they need accommodations to speak with you and/or Assistant Dean Kevin Ewell. You may wish to include some of this language in your syllabus:

(For undergraduates) Students with documented disabilities who need accommodations in this class must do so through the Rutgers Disabilities Services Office. See [http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/](http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/) for details. You can also speak with a SC&I adviser about your disability by visiting the Office of Student Services in the SC&I Building, Room 214 or calling them at 848-932-7500 (dial 2 as your menu choice).

(For graduate students) Students with documented disabilities who wish accommodations in this class must do so through the Rutgers Disabilities Services Office. See [http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/](http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/) for details. SC&I Assistant Dean Kevin Ewell <kevin.ewell@rutgers.edu> will coordinate your services locally. Student who develop disabling medical problems or other issues during the semester that affect your ability to complete coursework should request advising from [insert name of the director of the academic program] or SC&I Assistant Dean Kevin Ewell <kevin.ewell@rutgers.edu>.

**Biographical Information about the Instructor**

Students often appreciate an overview of your education, scholarship, advising responsibilities, administrative roles, and/or philosophy.

**Weather and Other Emergencies**

The university rarely cancels classes for inclement weather. To check if classes are cancelled, visit [http://campusstatus.rutgers.edu/](http://campusstatus.rutgers.edu/). You can also try to call 732-932-7799. During severe weather conditions, announcements are made over the following radio stations: WCTC (1450AM), WMGQ (98.3FM), WRSU (88.7FM),
WMCA (570AM), WOR (710AM), WCBS (880AM), WABC (770AM), WBGO (83.3FM), WHWH (1350AM), WPST (97.5FM), WJLK (131OFM), WMTR (1250AM).

Other Information You May Provide

Feel free to use any of this information in your syllabus:

Students are expected to take the initiative to become aware of university policies and services that will help them succeed in their academic work. You are responsible for following the guidelines specified in the university’s academic integrity policy, procuring information literacy skills needed to succeed in academics, seeking advisement when needed, and taking advantage of support services.

Students seeking help with the content of this course should contact the instructor either during office hours, or make a separate appointment. Students seeking help with the scheduling of classes or registration should contact the SC&I Student Services Office in Room 214 of the SC&I Building. Check here for contact information: http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/student-services/contact-us.html.

A great deal of information is available on the SC&I website, including course descriptions and details about all degree programs: http://comminfo.rutgers.edu.

Rutgers has Learning Centers on each campus where any student can obtain tutoring and other help; for information, check http://lrc.rutgers.edu/ Rutgers also has a Writing Program where students can obtain help with writing skills and assignments: http://plangere.rutgers.edu/index.html

SC&I IT Services offers help with a variety of technology problems. They are located in the SC&I Building in Room 120 (first floor); 848-932-5555; help@comminfo.rutgers.edu.