The Learning-Centered FIU Syllabus: A Checklist

This checklist is meant to help you design or refine your syllabi so they are accessible, motivating, and learning-centered. The sections are organized around questions students might have about any college course. Please refer to the FIU Faculty Handbook for official syllabus requirements, which have been noted below with ◊.

Course Information: Am I in the right place?

☐ Course name and number◊
☐ Semester and year offered◊
☐ Pre- and co-requisites (if any)◊
☐ Course modality (hybrid, online, face-to-face)
☐ Classroom location and times of class meetings (if any)

Who will help me learn?

☐ Instructor name and contact information◊
☐ Instructor department, office location, and office hours◊
☐ TA names, contact information, and office hours (if any)
☐ LA names, contact information, and office hours (if any)

What will I learn in this course?

☐ A course description◊ that communicates what students will learn and why the course is important (e.g. relevance to future coursework, career, civic life), written in student-friendly language
☐ Goals for student learning, covering not only concepts and skills, but also a set of perspectives, priorities, or even shifted values
☐ A list of ways students will be changed because they took this course

How will I learn in this course?

☐ Clear descriptions of the kinds of activities students will do to accomplish the learning goals
☐ A schedule◊ that shows the order in which students will build their knowledge and skills through practice and feedback
☐ An explanation of the purpose of the various learning activities and the rationale for the sequencing and pacing of those activities

When and how will we measure my progress?

☐ A list of major assessments◊ that will measure students’ progress toward the learning goals (e.g. exams, projects, performances) with due dates
☐ Clear explanations of your expectations for performance on those major assessments (What does success look like?)
☐ A grading scheme◊ that illustrates how you will determine final course grades, including a variety of items and their relative weights (e.g. homework, quizzes, exams, discussions, projects, reflective writing, etc.)
☐ A clear explanation of the rationale behind your grading scheme and evaluation practices
What materials will I need?

☐ Texts (including ISBN)◊; denote if required, recommended, or optional/supplemental
☐ Lab supplies, artistic supplies, professional and ancillary items (if any)◊
☐ Technology (if any)

What behaviors will help me succeed in this course?

☐ A clear description of students’ role in the course and what active, productive participation looks like both in and out of class (taking into account the modality)
☐ A realistic idea of how much time students should set aside for coursework
☐ Tips for success, including time management, use of resources, habits of successful students, etc.
☐ An expression of high expectations for academic integrity, including what ethical conduct entails and why it is essential in your field
☐ An explanation of why attendance in class is important
☐ Any policies of the instructor and/or department that may impact a student’s enrollment or final grade◊

What are the best ways to communicate with my professor, TA, and peers?

☐ A welcoming invitation to communicate with you, TAs and LAs (if any), and peers
☐ A statement of your preferred methods of communication, how you prefer to be addressed, and what students should expect regarding response times and other details
☐ Tips for the best ways to communicate and collaborate with peers, especially online

Where can I go for extra support or resources?

☐ Information about resources relevant to the course and/or the discipline
☐ Information about on-campus support (e.g. the Disability Resource Center, the Center for Academic Success, the Center for Excellence in Writing, Counseling & Psychological Services)◊

Syllabus Usability Checklist:

☐ Is the information logically organized?
☐ Are the formatting, layout, and font size, type, and color accessible for students? (Please note that some students are visually impaired or colorblind. For more details and/or help, refer to WCAG 2.1 at a Glance.)
☐ Are the tone and diction appropriate for the audience?
☐ Is the course information easy to find?
☐ Is your contact information easy to find?
☐ Is the grading scheme clear?
☐ Have you identified important dates (e.g. drop date, holidays, etc.)◊
☐ Is the syllabus available electronically?
☐ Have you asked a colleague and/or consulted with a student for feedback on the tone and clarity of your syllabus?

◊ Indicates item is required per FIU policy 300.010, Course Syllabus Requirements.